



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

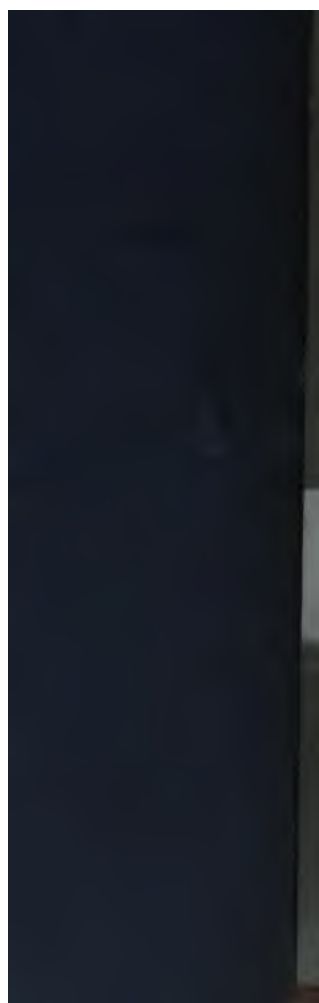
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



R. BUCKIE,
STATION
82, SYDEN



Rupert H. Coode,
L
A. C. Coode.





Back o' the Moon

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

"THE DRAKESTONE."

Second Edition. Price 6s.

Selection of Press Opinions.

"It is, both in construction and workmanship, very unlike the usual flimsy story which does duty as a modern novel. This book is more like the fiction of some fifty or sixty years ago, when the appearance of a novel was, to a certain extent, an event in the world of letters."—*The Spectator*.

"There is much sound work in the novel; quaint local customs are conscientiously reproduced, and the characters, with the exception of a rather shadowy heroine, are living beings."—*The Athenæum*.

"The book is thoughtfully as well as cleverly written, and at least maintains the promise of its forerunners."—*The Times*.

"The character-drawing is strong and clear, the run of the incident perfectly natural, and the outlook kind and manly in a spirit that puts to the blush a great deal of meretricious and catchpenny work."—*Full Mall Gazette*.

"Mr. Onions's canvas is crowded with well-drawn characters, and the whole presents a particularly lively and clever study of Yorkshire life and manners eighty years ago."—*The Academy*.

"Here he is thoroughly at home, and he writes with rare insight and uncommon skill of the country folk of our dales."—*Leeds Mercury*.

"The present story derives its main interest from the liveliness of its presentation of the countryside and rustic character of Yorkshire, as these appeared to the observant eye in the earlier half of the nineteenth century."—*The Scotsman*.

"As we have said, the book is devoid of sensationalism of any sort; but, for all its quiet tone, it is one of the few books of the season worth careful reading, and worth also a permanent place in any library."—*The Westminster Gazette*.

"Mr. Onions, who knows his Yorkshire nearly as well as any writer of the time, has improved amazingly, and 'The Drakestone' is of sufficiently high quality to make one anticipate with interest his next book."—*The Yorkshire Post*.

"It is a strong book all round, and the culminating catastrophe—the breaking-in of the marsh upon the moorland—is well rendered and effective. The work is one which will repay study, and we have few living writers who could better it."—*The Sheffield Daily Telegraph*.

"It is an *olla podrida* of vivid sketches of Yorkshire life, more faithfully conceived and picturesquely rendered than we have ever seen before."—*The Daily Mail*.

"The humble lives of the peasant folk, their jealousies, bickerings and junketings, take their proper place as background to the working out of the Drake prophecies, while the chief figures are limned with rare skill and insight. A clever and deeply-interesting book."—*The Liverpool Post*.



○

Back o' the Moon

AND OTHER STORIES

BY

OLIVER ONIONS

AUTHOR OF

"The Drakestone," "Tales from a Far Riding," &c.



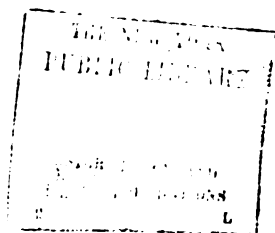
LONDON

HURST AND BLACKETT, LIMITED

1906

All rights reserved

TO
AG AND EM,
MY SISTERS






PREFACE.

Halifax, Sunday, 26th August, 1778.—"Understanding there was great need of it, I preached on 'Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' I spoke with all plainness, and yet did not hear that anyone was offended."

JOHN WESLEY.

Halifax, 1836.—"I am very sorry that there was a 'great need' for Mr. Wesley to bring (this) charge . . . though unable to unravel the secret."

URIAH WALKER
(Methodist Historian).







CONTENTS.

BACK O' THE MOON.

CHAP.	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
I.—HORWICK THURSDAY	9
II.—THE EXECUTIVE	21
III.—"JOHNNY COPE"	34
IV.—EASTWOOD ELLAH	46
V.—THE WADSWORTH WEDDING	61
VI.—EMMASON	77
VII.—CICELY	89
VIII.—CRUDELITAS	103
IX.—THE SLACK	120
X.—THE HOME-COMING	133
XI.—A HUNDRED POUNDS	147
XII.—THE CLOTH MERCHANT	162
XIII.—THE SCOUT	179
XIV.—ONE WAY IN, NONE OUT	193
XV.—THE CAVE IN SOYLAND	202
XVI.—COVER.	217
XVII.—THE MOON TURNED ROUND AGAIN	232

THE PILLERS.

I.—THE NIGHTINGALE	241
II.—THE LADYSHAW	248
III.—THE PRESS	256
IV.—AT PORTSANNET	267

SKELF-MARY	279
LAD-LASS	297
THE FAIRWAY	317





BACK O' THE MOON.

INTRODUCTION.

THE first thing that the new parson noticed, as he rode up the narrow, precipitous street late in the October afternoon, was that the muffled knock-knocking that proceeded from the houses ceased as he ascended; and the next was that he had never in his life seen so many mongrel dogs as prowled and sniffed at his heels. He had left his grey galloway in Horwick Town, three miles back; he now saw the reason why they had laughed, and advised him that he might as well sell it there and then. Wadsworth Shelf had been steep; Wadsworth Street was precipitous; and at the head of the street rose Wadsworth Scout, dark and mountainous. The Scout was thinly wooded here and there with birch and mountain-ash. It overshadowed the village beneath it; and as the parson reached the small square at its foot he saw, over an irregular row of roofs, the squat belfry of the little church that was now his charge. A ramshackle inn, with a long horse-trough in front of it, occupied the lower side of the square.

As the knock-knocking ceased entirely, the parson became conscious that men and women had come softly out into the street behind him, and he knew without looking that behind every blind and shutter there was a pair of eyes. A raw-boned fellow lounged against the horse-trough of the inn, and he had taken off one of his wood-soled clogs and was peering into it as if for a stone. The parson had been warned that few in his new cure were known by their baptismal names, and had been told the name by which he must seek his own verger and bellringer. Approaching the fellow with the clog, he asked where he should find one Pim o' Cuddy. The fellow jerked his head in the direction of the church under the dark Scout, and continued to peer into the clog. The dogs trailed after the parson as he crossed the square.

An hour later he returned. He had, apparently, learned which of the houses standing back up a stone-walled lane had been made ready for him, for he made for it without so much as a glance round him. He passed beneath the lanternless arch of wrought-iron that spanned his gateway. Very soon the old body who had made his house ready came out, sought a lad, and bade him go to Pim o' Cuddy at the church. The lad and Pim o' Cuddy (a wizened little man, who walked like a pair of callipers), returned across the square, carrying between them a small heavy chest. The chest contained, as the village knew, what remained

INTRODUCTION.

3

of the papers and parchments that for so long had strewn the vestry. Later, the housekeeper reported that the parson had sat up with these half the night.

The weavers of Wadsworth and beyond have a sort of thwarted sense of the droll, and first they smiled sourly, and then guffawed, as the full humour of the parson's coming broke on them. They chuckled at the looms that had been the cause of the knock-knocking, caught their fellows' eyes in the steep street and roared again. For Pim o' Cuddy's pigeons knew their way home through the broken louver-boards of the squat belfry by this. If sometimes a ferret refused to come out of the air-hole by the buttress into which he had been put (and the church "lifted," as they said, with rats), well, it was cheaper to take up a floor-board or two than to pull the church down. As for the unhinged church-door, it was a wit from Booth, over the moors far beyond the mountainous Scout, who observed that doorways were made to let folk into church and not to keep them out; and for the rest—the broken windows, the hen-coops in the aisle, the parchments taken by the lads to make kites, and the single elm of the churchyard that had been cut down to furnish galley-baulks for the looms of they knew whom—the responsibility for these things rested somewhere between Pim o' Cuddy and the bishop of the diocese.

On the first Sunday morning of his incumbency,

save for a preliminary scrubbing and cleaning and moving out of the hen-coops and so forth, the parson preached in the church as it was; and then, at his own cost, he set half a dozen men to work. He paid them at the end of the week in good coin from a canvas bag. Thereupon a ripple of excitement passed through the village. The winks and amused stares ceased. The parson was favoured with nods in the square and street, and awkward greetings were passed. A man came down from a loom-loft one morning and asked him whether he had half a guinea in exchange for silver; and the parson, in his own room, made a little sound of contempt that a few round pieces of gold should thus buy civility.

Then began the parson's observations of his new parish.

And first of all, he found that he might regard this hamlet of Wadsworth either as barbarous or civilised, and be, in a sense, right either way. It was rougher by several degrees than Horwick Town, where the Thursday cloth-market was held—the town where he had left the grey galloway; on the other hand, its manners passed as gentle and gracious by comparison with certain places away over the well-nigh impassable Scout—Holdsworth, Booth, Brotherton, Fluett, and other nooks lost in the wilds that stretched a dozen miles and more to Trawden Forest in Lancashire. This westerly district went by the name of Back o' the

Moon, or, as they had it, "Back o' th' Mooin" (for they put the "i" into that and similar words—the "Goose," the Wadsworth inn, was invariably the "Gooise," and there was scarce a long open vowel but they made a diphthong of it). This mountainous and inaccessible country was cut up into innumerable short deep valleys and Slacks, thinly-wooded Deans, stony Shelves, leagues of sweeping heather, and rocks, and Scouts and Ridges past counting. The best part of a winter might pass and a Holdsworth man would not be seen in Brotherton nor a Brotherton man in Booth; while Fluett, save for the Pack Causeway that, creeping by a roundabout route out of Horwick, gained the high land and crossed the whole district, would have been utterly isolated. One geographical fact especially impressed the parson: that was, that the nature of the country had determined the passing of special Acts of Parliament for the protection of the weavers of Back o' th' Mooin. A man could not, up and down such a country, carry on his back more than three or four stone of cloth. He was thus under certain disabilities as compared with those in the valleys; and it had been necessary to limit by enactment the buying-powers of the Horwick merchants, in order that the occupation of the three- and four-stone men should not be entirely gone.

Now the parson was a man of his eyes and ears, and of his tongue withal; and of one of the earliest

of his observations of Back o' th' Mooin he had, by a witty stroke, made a sort of parable. It was a common saying that in Wadsworth they were "All Raikeses—th' Eastwoods an' all," just as in Holdsworth they were all Bentleys, including the Murgatroyds, and in Brotherton Benns, not excepting the Deans. Now it happened that a Murgatroyd of Holdsworth was famous for a certain run of fighting-dogs of extraordinary tenacity, and this man (*his* nickname, by the way, was "Mish") hung about Wadsworth a good deal during the summer months—after a hoyden of a girl, it was said, one of the innumerable Raikeses. He had turned up one afternoon with one of his dogs in a leash, that it might not brawl with the tag-rag of Wadsworth, and a little group of men in the square were now jesting with him about the girl and now discussing the dog.

The parson chanced to pass as they were badgering this Mish for the secret of his breeding, and to hear Mish's reply—something about "in and in and in." He stopped abruptly before Murgatroyd.

"Yes," he interposed; "and in again on top of that, Murgatroyd, till they're wrong in their heads and afraid of nothing. Look——"

He pointed to a sackless lad who lolled his tongue over by the horse-trough. "Yes," he muttered, half to himself, "there's little doubt it's your Slacks and Scouts and Ridges do it; you'll not go

courting far from your firesides in the winter . . . maybe your metallic water is the cause of all this goitre, too . . . in and in and in . . .”

He shook his head and passed on his way.

And though the winter that was drawing near proved afterwards to be a green and mild one, the parson seemed able to guess without knowing what these same Scouts and hills would be like when the snow lay thick on them, and the packmen went before the horses with spades, seeking for the black-topped guide-posts, and of each hamlet it became true that there was “one way in and none out.”

The first time there came to the parson's ears, faintly over the hills, the clanging of hammers by night, he made an inquiry, and was told that the Forge on the moor, “where they shod the pack-horses,” was at work. On a later occasion, he put himself to the trouble to climb the precipitous Scout and to walk a mile or so along the Causeway in the direction of a low glow that seemed to come from a distant fold of the moor. Two figures, rising suddenly from the dark heather, stopped him and demanded his errand; and they conducted him back in silence by the way he had come. Then, about the middle of November, when the moors grew heavy with rain, the nightly clanging ceased, and the parson had other matters to occupy him. The winter set in, cold and raw and gusty; it was the winter of 1778; and the parson had time enough on his hands to speculate on breeding-in,

physical geography, goitre, or whatever else pleased him. Once only during that dead time, journeying on a December afternoon to Horwick, and meeting there one of the resident magistrates, John Emmason by name, did he speak of this noise of hammers ; he was counselled to confine his attention to God's law and to leave man's alone. The Wadsworth looms knock-knocked lazily during the short days ; the Horwick Thursday was thinly attended ; now and then, but rarely, a Back o' th' Mooiner from Holdsworth or Brotherton or Booth would appear in Wadsworth with his dog, his staff, and his budget of cloth ; and of any other staple of the district than that of the weaving of kerseys and shalloons the parson knew nothing.

In that ignorance he was, however, quite alone.

CHAPTER I.

HORWICK THURSDAY.

THE hands of the Piece Hall clock still lacked twenty minutes of eight of the March morning, but already Horwick market-place was thronged with the folk who had come in for the first general cloth-market of the spring. They had come in with their oilskin budgets of grey cloth on their shoulders, and their mastiffs and terriers and lurchers at their heels ; and such as had risen while it was yet night bore the lanterns that they had now extinguished. The air was misty and chill, and the hills grey, and a thin vapour of breathing lay over all the market-place ; but a brightness trembled in the haze, and the hoarse calling of the Horwick cocks and the fainter crowings that answered them over the misty heights made a cheerful din. The two long pieceboards, not yet dried of the night's damp, were stacked with the bales and budgets, and the weavers leaned against them and ate their breakfasts as they talked. On the cobbles of the "Cross Pipes," opposite the

Piece Hall, packmen were loosing the wame-tows of a string of horses. By the winding Fullergate the merchants and dyers arrived, and there mingled with the noises of the market and of the morning the incessant light pattering of wood-soled clogs on the hard earth.

Under the arches of the raised Piece Hall the fullers and dyers and merchants moved, and the arcades sounded with the shuffle of their leather shoes and the hum of their voices as they discussed the arrival of the new Supervisor of Excise, now breakfasting in the "Cross Pipes" opposite. The bailiff's books, wherein he entered his proper market charges, lay unopened on the small table at the top of the steps, and his two clerks moved among the Back o' th' Mooners at the piece-boards. The square stone pillars were placarded with lists, broadsheets, handbills and public notices, and against the pillar immediately behind the bailiff's table Matthew Moon, the merchant, leaned.

His fists were doubled deep in his breeches pockets, and his brow was closely contracted. He was forty, heavily built, with a square and solid head. As he moved slightly, there showed over the brown homespun of his shoulder one corner of a proclamation. The royal arms were visible, and the letters, plain and heavy and black, "COIN . . ." He moved again, and the letters became hidden.

There advanced to the bailiff's table and flung

one leg over it, a huge red man. He was red-haired, red-faced, red-whiskered, red as a red setter, and on his head was a cap of red foxskin. The table creaked beneath his weight, and the spread-out of his buckskin-covered thigh hid half the width of it. An old coat, of a wide and flaring cut, seemed to add even more to his bulk, and it was spotted with stains of vivid orange, apparently the eating of some acid. His accent, as he spoke, was not the curt and grudging accent of those parts.

"So we've got William Huggins's successor, Matthew," he said cheerfully; "have you seen him yet?"

As Matthew Moon moved slightly again, the ". . . ING" of the proclamation showed.

"No," he replied.

"Nor I. Well, we must entertain him. King's Excise or not, William Huggins was always companionable. A fair show of the lads here. You'll be at the meeting to-night?"

The merchant grunted. Presently he said, "What sort o' man does Sally say he is?"

"I don't know. Sally's out of heart, with Jim and Haigh all these months in York. Small wonder."

Matthew Moon frowned again, and was silent for a minute. Then he looked up and said, "Ye said entertainment, Arthur. Supervisors must take their chance o' that. Don't start taking it heady. Tongues tie knots that teeth can't loose, and we

don't want the speech and confession of Arthur Monjoy yet. Two in York's enough. Shall I be at the meeting? Yes; but don't go and take things too headstrong."

The big man laughed. "If I remember, they wanted to set the dogs on Huggins at first; none of that," he said; and as the merchant moved away the whole word "COINING" showed on the stone pillar.

Under the bow-windowed shops and houses the vendors of tinware and early market-stuff and wanded chairs and wooden vessels were knocking up their light booths; but no wares were yet displayed, for in Horwick the cloth market takes precedence of all else, and it is a fine of forty shillings, all but a penny, to as much as ask the price of a piece of cloth before the first stroke of the bell in the little round-topped turret of the Piece Hall. Among these minor merchants the women moved and gossipped. The waspish wife of Pim o' Cuddy, the Wadsworth verger, declared that she would not live with her husband another day—but she had left him at regular intervals any time this twenty years. Fat, gap-toothed Dooina Benn, who mashed herbs and distilled simples and rendered services to her sex that Mrs. Pim o' Cuddy was now little likely ever to stand in need of, exchanged tidings of the December's asthmas and lumbagos, and declared that she had scarce an ounce of gentian left to her name. They, too,

spoke of the new resident excise officer, but their voices fell as Sally Northrop passed. Sally managed the "Cross Pipes" during her husband's absence. Jim Northrop and Will Haigh should have been back from York months ago; and on a January afternoon, during Jim's detention, Dooina had been sent for to Sally in haste—the innkeeper's wife had been brought to bed of a son. Not far from the women, Mish Murgatroyd held in a leash his choicest specimen of dogflesh, a currant-eyed, brindled brute, heavy as a man, heavily muzzled and formidable. Curs and terriers and mastiffs, noses to the ground, threaded in and out across the market-place invisible scents and tracks of their own, and a group of Back o' th' Mooiners looked admiringly at the animal.

"Hares? Birds? Nay!" Mish said, setting his cap back from his forehead that had a bull's-front of rough hair over his brows, but showed two great calf-licks over his temples. "Keep off him, Charley, for all he's muzzled. Sometimes I think I wouldn't like to slip him at a man; no, not muzzled. Sitha!" A terrier had approached the brindled dog. The ferocious creature had not growled, but the terrier crawled away, tail and belly to earth. "What d'ye think o' that?" exclaimed Mish, exultingly.

Suddenly there was a stir under the stable-arch of the "Cross Pipes," and the noise about the inn fell. The hush¹ seemed to spread instantaneously,

and out of every upper window heads were thrust. Then, at the entrance of the stable-arch, a pack was flung down as if by inadvertence, and somebody stumbled over it. A tall weaver turned with a heavy budget on his back and jostled somebody. A man laughed. Then the weavers fell of their own accord back to the pieceboards, and the new Supervisor of the King's Excise was seen to be standing on the cobbles.

They have, as the Wadsworth parson had discovered, a humour of their own Horwick way. As if at a signal, there was a general catching of breath, and then a shout of laughter went up. Men clambered to the pieceboards to look over their neighbours' shoulders at the oddity that had been sent to them for an exciseman.

He was ludicrous, half a man only, a dwarf. An ordinary flight of steps would have taxed his diminutive legs; his body and shoulders were those of an undersized lad; and, awkwardly set on them, an enormous head wagged. His complexion was floury, and looked as if, had you touched it, a mothy dust would have adhered to your finger. A pair of round, black-rimmed spectacles made a double-O under his forehead, and behind them a pair of drowsy, blinking eyelids, purple with veining, showed scarce half of the greenish irises beneath them. He made alarmed and nervous movements with his hands as a hundred dogs pressed about him.

The peal of laughter had scarce died away when

a couple of weavers had an exquisite idea. They hoisted themselves on one of the pieceboards and began to clack together the wooden heels of their brass-bound clogs. Across the market-place two more men began to clack. There was a general scramble for the pieceboards.

The infection caught and spread instantaneously. The tall pieceboards became an avenue of legs regularly moving—legs in casings of hide, in wrappings of straw-band, calves and tibias in stockings of grey and white and blue and brown—and an appalling racket of sound arose. In a second they had taken their time from the original clackers; the rhythmic high noise filled the market-place, rang under the Piece Hall arches, spread in a harsh, splitting cascade to the hills, affronted the sense of hearing. A man from Booth tossed up a pigeon. The derisive, puerile noise fell to a soft beat; it rose again as if a regiment of paviors had been at work; and the villainous dogs that pressed round the preposterous exciseman seemed but to await a signal from their masters. The bell in the turret of the Piece Hall struck eight; the wooden heels accompanied it; and then, as if by magic, there came a silence. Eyes still streaming with tears of enjoyment turned towards the Piece Hall steps. The big red man was descending them.

Monjoy extended his hand and snapped his fingers.

“Call those dogs off!” he ordered; and from

the indescribable short mingling of noises that followed each dog seemed to sort out his own cluck or call or whistle, just as they had threaded the invisible tracks across the market-place. The great fellow stood opposite the exciseman.

"Our new Resident Supervisor?" he said courteously, his lips twitching as if he himself had to strive not to make drollery of it.

The heavy, livid lids behind the round black spectacles lifted a little, and the dwarf gave a short nasal "Hn, hn!"

"Yes, yes; I am he; hn, hn! My name is Cope—Jeremy Cope."

This time Big Monjoy could not resist the smile. "It is a historic name in these parts," he said.

"Yes, yes, yes. . . . I should say, rather, How so, Mr.—?"

"How so? Well, if the fellows you see about you are anything at all in politics (which I doubt), they are for—you know whom: not the Elector. A gentleman of your name made himself famous some thirty years ago, and things move slowly hereabouts. But perhaps you have heard my own name from William Huggins—Arthur Monjoy."

"From William—from whom?" queried the little man; and to those on the pieceboards he seemed pleased that any should take the trouble to talk to one so insignificant as he.

"Your predecessor; you did not know him? Our very good friend, Huggins was; always, in some

respects, a 'Pot o' One' (as they say here of a man who combs his wool alone)—that was the disability of his office. Unofficially, we counted him one of ourselves."

"The poor fellow is—hn, hn!—dead, then?"

"One foggy evening last November, with a pot in his hand and a pipe in his mouth, like the gentleman in the ballad. Died of a Halo Punch.—But you must let me show you our market."

"Thank you, thank you, thank you. A barren country hereabouts, Mr. ——"

"(Monjoy) . . . Barren? So-so. Yes, the hills are barren, and breed a rough homely folk. Our staple is cloth, as you see. I see you are looking at the stains on my old coat. You are right; they are of acid. I am no clothier myself; I am a seal-engraver.—What was I saying? Ah, our cloth! Our cloth goes far afield, much to Liverpool; and in return the good folk of Liverpool press on us a certain number of these metal pieces, the possession of which is vulgarly supposed to constitute wealth. But we know better than that, you and I—eh, Cope? 'Fill me with your corn and I'll cover you with my cloth; a third shall build us roof and hearth'—that's the true wealth, the commonwealth, eh?—But your pardon. I carry my coals to Newcastle—that is to say, my cloth to Horwick."

"Hn! hn! hn! You are a very pleasant gentleman, Mr. Monjoy. . . . I should say, now,

that a great variety of saxifrages is to be found on your hills ? ”

“ Best let the hills alone ; these gentlemen at the pieceboards are not always in a merry humour. Come and see the market.”

As Monjoy passed up the square with the supervisor, talking pleasantly, and explaining that save for the cloth-staple the district would be a wilderness, cachinnations, as if at some hidden jest, passed along the pieceboards. For all the bell had rung, not a man had unstrapped his budget. Big Monjoy pointed out this feature, or that man—goitred John Raikes, dusty with the earth of the fulling-mill ; Mish, with the brindled dog squatting under the pieceboard beneath him ; the pack-road winding up the Shelf to the Causeway, and so forth. And every now and then the weavers seemed to see the ludicrous figure afresh and to break into fresh chuckles.

Matthew Moon drew James Eastwood, the Wadsworth flockmaster, aside under the pillars of the Piece Hall, and took him by the sleeve.

“ There’s times, James, when Arthur wants libbing of his tongue,” he growled. “ Two at Ouse Bridge now . . . he’s daft. He cuts our dies well enough ; but look here—right in our midst ! ” He rapped with the back of his hand on the proclamation.

James Eastwood, a lean man, with a cracked and wrinkled and sly face, laughed softly.

"Leave the bills to John Emmason," he said ;
"John knows what he's about when he sticks bills
up. The more bills the more safety.—Did ye ever
see aught more like a frog nor yon ? "

"That daft talk o' Arthur's ! There's more
fox in Arthur's cap than in all the rest of him put
together. Listen to him now ! " And again the
voice of the big red man was heard.

". . . That may be ; but many of them saw
Charles Edward in the '45, in Manchester. For
that matter, his drummer was a Horwick lad ;
there's a tale about that I'll tell you some time.
But King or Elector, it's small odds now, and I
shouldn't wonder (this, of course, is *unofficial*) but
my own word carried as much weight in Back o'
th' Moooin as another man's.—Our Piece Hall is
considered a fine building. The statue in the niche
is of Queen Anne ; a good piece of work, take an
engraver's word for it.—The market is very late.
—Ah, let me make you known to John Emmason,
one of our magistrates. You and he will doubtless
work in some measure together. . . ."

The bailiff had now opened his books, and the
Back o' th' Mooners were unpacking their budgets
on the pieceboards. The market was opening
tardily. The huge red-whiskered man in the
foxskin cap continued to present the new excise-
man here and there, and then the bailiff's clerks
began to pass more busily between the pieceboards.
Quickly the talk and laughter fell to a low murmur

of exchange ; and presently Monjoy said, " Come, a morning draught at the ' Cross Pipes.' What say you ? "

The eyes beneath the bruised-looking lids blinked up at Monjoy.

" Certainly, certainly, certainly ; but I fear I must confess—hn ! hn !—that I have a weakly stomach. The weakest glass of brandy and water—a very little excess—ah ! " His narrow chest rose in a quick little sigh.

" Ay ? Well, Huggins was the other way. ' Four-in-Hand Huggins,' we called him ; but it beat him at the finish. Come."

Half-way down the market-place Monjoy stopped to exchange a word with Matthew Moon. " Ay, eight o'clock, in the kitchen," Moon grunted, and Monjoy nodded and returned to Jeremy Cope. They passed almost unnoticed into the " Cross Pipes."



CHAPTER II.

THE EXECUTIVE.

THROUGH the wall-stones of the end of the "Cross Pipes" that abutted on the market-place the soot of the chimneys had in some mysterious way worked, so that the flues and branchings from the various chambers showed like some grimy inverted cactus. An addition had been built forward to the cobbled space, and up and down it, following the pitch of the roof, ran the name of the house, with every "S" turned the wrong way about. From this again projected the red-curtained bow-window of the parlour; and while the public entrance lay to the right within the stable-arch, the approach to the kitchen and private parts of the house lay on the other side, up a cobbled alley.

The March night had fallen, and the lights of the scattered farmhouses of the Shelf might almost have been stars, so lofty were they. The market-place was filled with the dim illumination that came through the blinds and the chinks of the shutters

of the surrounding houses. A lantern that had been set down for a moment on one of the piece-boards made a dull gleam down the polished surface. The crimson square of the window of the "Pipes" was broken by the shadows of heads within the window-seat, and up the dark alley-way to the kitchen, through [an 'ace-of-heart's perforation in the upper part of the door, another light flickered, as of a candle guttering in a draughty passage.

In the kitchen a fire of peats smouldered on the hearth and made a rich glow on the copper kettle that bubbled before it. The lid of the kettle vibrated with a continuous sound of purring metal. Two oil-lamps hung side by side from the low ceiling; and the blur of lamp carbon on the plaster above them was patterned with concentric circles that intersected and made as it were the eyes of an enormous owl. A deep recess formed a window-seat; opposite, a niche in the wall was hidden by a curtain on a string; and the kitchen was spotlessly clean and smelt of new bread.

Matthew Moon sat on an infant's stool by the hearth, with a quill set bit-wise between his teeth. On the floor by his side lay a ledger. Gofred John Raikes (who, in this business that was not cloth, represented the Back o' th' Mooiners on the Executive) lay smoking along the window-seat. Eastwood, the flockmaster, was spinning a bright

crown-piece on the table ; and Arthur Monjoy bestrode the hearth colossus-wise with the back of his fox-skin cap rubbing against the high mantel.

The purring of the kettle seemed to irritate Matthew Moon ; he set the lid on edge, the sound ceased, and a little cloud of vapour escaped. Presently Monjoy spoke.

" Well, say you have it so," he said. " I'll not deny the prudence of watching, setting an extra crow or two along the Causeway, and all that ; but why do you want to shift the Forge ? We were glad enough to move from Fluett ; before that we were Booth way, and a pretty time we had getting there ; and now you'd set it up in Brotherton Slack, the dampest, darkest hole in all the district, five miles from the Causeway—Brotherton Slack, where the ground steams like a tip and toadstools come up out o' the bog rank as sink-strippings and red as a runner's waist-coat—— "

Matthew Moon answered earnestly.

" Do listen, Arthur. If the Causeway's handy for us, it's handy for others too. Fluett was different. You know why we left Fluett. Fluett was over-easy got at t'other side, Trawden side, and the lime-trade was brisk at Fluett, too, and folk about. As for toadstools, it's safety we're taking to the Slack for, not health."

Monjoy brought himself to an upright posture and rubbed his hands down his scorched thighs.

"Heigho!" he cried; and he was about to reply, when the door opened, and Sally Northrop entered. She was a dark-haired little body, but her brightness was faded, and weeks of anxiety had pulled her down. She stepped to the niche in the wall, lifted the curtain, and looked within.

"I thought he stirred," she said, replacing the curtain; and then she hesitated, her hands fumbling with her apron.

"Ye've no word, I suppose, Arthur? Cicely hasn't been gone an hour; she knew o' no news, she said——"

"No word's a good word, Sally," Monjoy replied gently. "He has all he wants—money for garnish, ease o' irons, and all you can think of; and the lawyers shall have every penny but he shall be back. Don't worry. 'No case' is what John Emmason says."

"What did he say o' Jimmy?" She glanced towards the niche.

"His love he sent, and a kiss. That'll make his home-coming glad. Keep all as tidy as a new pin for a little longer, and let Cicely help you all she can."

"D'ye want anything now?"

"No."

She sighed and went out. The men remained silent for a full minute. and then Moon muttered: "Thank God I bring trouble to no woman." They resumed their discussion.

"Another thing," said the merchant. "John there brings the silver in, and I keep the books, and bring most o' the gold. John and me's your outriders, that can tell the way things are going. Now ask John if this isn't true. Though the most shuts their eyes and thinks none the worse of a guinea after we've had it a day or two, yet there's others wouldn't lend us a crown or a Portugal, no, not to have it back an hour after with interest paid safe as a bank. They're quiet, that sort, but they're always there. They've been there all along, and I know who they are.—Ay, I see this plating idea well enough; it's good, and does away with a deal o' borrowing; but these others is still there. So this new man has that to start wi'. He may be another Huggins, or he mayn't; give him no advantage. He must be watched for the present from getting up to doffing his shirt again. The clogger's shop—we're agreed on that; and past Wadsworth Scout a crow must be set behind every whin and stone. It's expense, but it's the cheapest. We're the Exec'tive, and that's my vote; that, and shift the Forge to Brotherton, and all meetings after this at the 'Gooise.'"

"It's right what Matthew says about them others," Raikes observed from the window-seat; "things has got very tight lately. Your plating-notion's naught but just come i' time."

Monjoy leaned against the mantel-piece again.

"Well, I'll not hold out; we may as well eat the devil as sup the broth he's boiled in," he said, "So we shift the forge. Well, what next?"

Moon glanced quickly at the door by which Sally Northrop had gone out; then he dropped his voice.

"This next, that I was saying to James this morning, Arthur," he said. "Ye give too much away wi' your tongue. It's folly to talk as ye did this morning. They say ye told him ye'd thought o' copying the Queen Anne yonder i' metal."

"I never said so," cried Monjoy.

"Well, you talk o' Charles Edwards and Commonwealths. Remember, there's a bairn i' yon niche that his father hasn't seen yet——"

James Eastwood interposed quickly.

"Let me speak," he said. "John Emmason's sent this Cope word to sup wi' him next week. Now mark; afore Cope can do anything—and that's supposing he isn't another Huggins, and Huggins got bed sore sooner nor foot sore—afore he can do anything, he must see John, or else John Leedes, or else Hemstead, the solicitor. Very well; what is it he wants? Information, ye say: now listen. He can have it. Let him come to this very Horwick Thursday. Let one of us say this: 'Yon's Red Monjoy, that engraves the dies; plating's his next move! Yon's Matthew Moon, a cloth-merchant by trade, that keeps the books,

every crown and Portugal entered up this dozen year and more. Mish yonder, and Dick o' Dean, they do most o' th' striking; and for clipping and lending and so on, there's three or four hundred here, and ye can tak' your pick.' Tch! All that isn't worth a tick o' one o' my sheep! It's like he knew all that afore he came. Hear what John Emmason says, mumbling in his sleep in an arm-chair (ye know John's ways): It's evidence he'll want, evidence to base a case on. They'd ha' hanged Jim and Haigh months ago if they'd had evidence. They're bound by th' Law, same as us, and John—well, if John hasn't telled me th' Law, he can leave a book open, can't he? and I can read what's marked in it wi' a pen, can't I? It's treason, by Edward Third; four hundred pound and branding for having clippings, William; a search-warrant on complaint, George; but all's ta'en on evidence.—But I'm for moving the Forge too, for it wadn't be such bad evidence to catch us wi' our fingers in it."

"To be sure," murmured John Raikes.

"That's agreed," said Monjoy, curtly. He had not ceased to frown since Matthew Moon's rebuke.

The infant in the niche gave a feeble cry, and Moon rose to call Sally. Sally took up babe and bedclothes in a bundle.

"Send us some ale in, Sally," Monjoy said; and he added to his companions: "When the ale comes I have something to say to the Executive."

Presently the ale was brought. Monjoy took a deep draught, and bestrode the hearth again.

"Tell me, Matthew—tell me, John and James," he said slowly, "what d'ye think this trade of ours, as it stands, is worth? (Wait a minute and let me finish.) Is it worth a deal? Reckon the risk. Reckon the cost, time and money. Reckon we've to dodge about with the Forge, Fluett, Booth, Brotherton, and so on. Reckon what I could make at engraving; John at the stocks and teazels; James with his flocks; Matthew at the pieceboards and his warehouse. Is it a deal better than honesty?"

The amazed faces of the three told how deeply they were committed to the traffic; for a minute they were motionless. Then Moon said, "Ye haven't finished."

"I say, as it stands, it's poor wages," Monjoy said.

There was no chair to his hand; he drew up the infant's stool that the merchant had vacated. His chin was just above the edge of the table, and he took the bright crown-piece and weighed it thoughtfully in his hand. After a minute's pondering he continued:

"This—the plating—is well enough; but suppose there's better to be done?—Tell me, which of you've heard of Bulmer's workings, Trawden side?"

"Eh?" said Moon. "Nobody, since their mother dandled them."

"Of course, of course ; my tongue will be running away with me, I suppose. Never mind Bulmer, then. Instead, what about the bellpits all along the Causeway, and the alum mine still working a mile or two over the Edge ? "

"Come to something, Arthur," Eastwood interposed.

"By and by.—Lead has been found hereabouts, and some of it's been shipped to Holland, and worked over again, and a tithe of it lost in the working, but a profit made even then. How, think you ? " He advanced his chin along the table, flipped away the crown-piece, and quietly pronounced the word "Silver."

By and by he continued.

"I've had a busyish winter in that garret over your warehouse, Matthew. This is our first meeting since last November, and perhaps I'm over-shooting myself a little. Never mind. At Rimington in Craven, and on Brunghill Moor in Craven, they've had it. Lead ore it is, and a test-master has assayed it (Basby, they called him), and it worked out at sixty pounds more or less to the ton."

"In Craven," observed Matthew Moon, drily.

"Well, I've been to see it," Monjoy retorted ; "but let me finish. Here, alum and coal we know about. For iron, Holdsworth Dyke is red as a haw with canker-water any day you care to go and look. Noon Nick stones, they're pure pyrites. Kick up the heather, and all Back o' th' Moon's red

and blue and grey with mineral. Whether it would pay's another matter; the Dutchmen made it pay."

"It were me closed up th' last bellpit," John Raikes remarked; "go on, Arthur; it's grand hearing."

"Very well; and you'll laugh at this; Matthew will, because it isn't business-like. What else d'you think I've studied this winter? Why, a ballad-book. Hugh Pudsay's ballad. You've heard of Pudsay's cockleshell-shillings (when you were dandled, maybe), and so had I; but I thought twice. I'm not talking now of his making silver dilly-spoons and selling them for a shilling, and then waking up to it that he might just as well make the shilling. Perhaps he *didn't* work a silver mine without patent, and get tripped by some Cope or other, and set off on horse-back for London to save his neck. Perhaps that's only a song about his getting patent and pardon and meeting the exciseman coming in ten minutes after the fair. But that cockleshell he stamped his shillings with—follow me—it was an escallop, and a mint-mark for that very year of Elizabeth. D'you take me?"

James Eastwood was tilted back in his chair, watching the intersecting rings of light on the ceiling; he let the chair slowly down.

"D'ye mean, Arthur, you'd mine Back o' th' Mooin on th' chance o' finding silver?"

"We haven't got quite so far yet," Monjoy replied, rising from the low stool; and James Eastwood gave a low whistle.

Presently Matthew Moon shoved out his lip.

"Pshaw! It's a ballad, Arthur, a ballad," he said.

"What do you say, John?" Monjoy demanded of Raikes in the window-seat.

"Tell us some more; it's grand," murmured Raikes.

"Very well; now take this in. Within this ten years money's been put up in Lancashire to open Bulmer's workings again. Reason they didn't do it, it was blabbed, and the excise pricked up its ears. They prayed for a patent for lead, but that wasn't what they wanted. They'd have mixed their ores and done the Dutchmen's trick; but as soon as that pays and the excise wakes up, pff!—it's a Mine Royal at once."

"If they stopped it in Lancashire, they'd stop it here," Eastwood said thoughtfully.

"In Back o' th' Mooin?" said Monjoy, meaningly; and there was a long silence, broken only by the sound of the leaves of the ledger that Matthew Moon turned over at arms-length.

Suddenly he closed the ledger with a flap.

"Ah, well!" he observed, "then we've only to walk there and get it."

Monjoy spoke composedly, ignoring the irony.

"I wonder what Matthew would say if he heard

my plan for finding it," he said. "Phew! He'd call *that* madness!"

"Tell us, Arthur," said Raikes.

"Not I! If I don't find it, I'm fool enough already without that."

Raikes and Eastwood were plainly engaged by the idea, and soon Eastwood ejaculated under his breath: "My God! the risk!"

At that Monjoy flung out his arms, displaying his vast chest.

"Risk?" he cried. "What can you risk more than you're risking now—a white cap and the mortal push? You've risked that this dozen years; and for what? Clippings and scrapings and filings! You've risked Ouse Bridge for that! Now by —, there are those in Back o' th' Mooin ready to call Arthur Monjoy king, but I'll kick my shoes off at the end of a tow for the chance of being a king in truth! . . . Risk? Could an army rout us out o' that wilderness? Who gets far over Wadsworth Scout without a 'by-your-leave'? The country's made for it!—To Pudsay and the ballad, Matthew!" He drank.

"To the gold they find i' partridges' heads and hares' bellies," quoth the merchant, rising. "Well, I suppose we go on the old way while Arthur's looking for his silver? A new way o' finding it, too; happen it'll be a new sort o' silver. We'll have to wait for the plating-plant too, now. Ah, well!—The next meeting's at the 'Gooise' . . .



THE EXECUTIVE.

33

Nay, if we're all stirring I'll turn the lamps down ;
there's no sense in wasting oil ; we aren't kings
yet——”

He turned low the lamps that made on the
ceiling the rings that intersected like the eyes of
an owl.

CHAPTER III.

"JOHNNY COPE."

THE house occupied by the new supervisor of excise lay up a narrow cobbled croft, turning sharp from the Fullergate by the "Fullers' Arms." It was, in reality, half of what had once been a considerable house, extending along the top of the croft; but the right-hand portion had for long been boarded and shuttered, and a pear-tree, planted by design or lack of thought close to the wall, divided the two portions. The lower part of the tree grew of necessity outwards; but at the eaves it spread back and embowered in its branches two dormer windows. Between the cobbles of the croft grass grew; the place was retired and quiet; and on the roof-flags pigeons crooned and flirted and made white droppings.

The shop of Cole the clogger was in the extreme corner, adjoining the supervisor's house. It lay in the basement, reached by half a dozen stone steps down a sort of well, and its window was flush

with the grass and the cobbles. Thus, appropriately enough, the clogger was able to recognise his visitors by that portion of their attire that was in many cases his own handiwork. There was no mistaking the calliper-legs of Pim o' Cuddy, the darned blue worsted that cased Mish Murgatroyd's shins, the vast calf-muscles of Big Monjoy, nor the pudding ankles of fat Dooina Benn, the clogger's sister.

A facetious soul, Cole the clogger was, and apparently a well-beloved by his neighbours. He was seldom without visitors, on his steps, on the bench within his door, or supporting his outer wall. As he shaped the wooden soles in his vice, or with his cobbler's knife carved the stiff uppers, Cole ever declared that the odour of the leather that soaked in his tubs of black water was as good for the lungs as his sister's gentian, and none who wore his clogs (he vowed) suffered from toothache or neuralgia.

Fond of animals Cole was, too. On his bench a profligate magpie harped on the wires of his cage, and over the leather thong that held his knives and awls and pincers there were always three or four pigeons in wicker cages—plain homers, that knew their way to Holdsworth and Brotherton and Booth. Should a man from one of these places be interested in (say) the Horwick weather, it was easily arranged that the tossing up of a blue or black or mixed bird should mean that there was thunder about, or that rain was likely; while if

you were able to write, you could convey, with as much detail as you pleased, the state of the atmosphere or the set of the wind. The pigeons were frequently changed. The clogger's shop was known as "The Gazette."

Cole the clogger had one gift that endeared him to his gossiping neighbours, and to Back o' th' Mooin especially—that of mimicry; and Cole vowed that no such pair of legs as the supervisor's had ever passed his window. The clogger recognised the chance of his lifetime.

"Eh!" he cried one day, to one or two laughter-loving souls gathered in his basement, "but he pods down th' croft like I can't tell ye what—sitha!" He ducked his head into his fat shoulders, crooked his knees, and began to make a little creeping perambulation among his tubs of soaking leather. "Pit, pat, pit, pat—like a cat on a hot bak'stone—and his laugh—a sort of whinney—"Hn! hn!" like summat snapping i' th' bridge of his nose. A haw on his eyes an' all——"

Then the clogger was seized with a rare idea.

"By Gow! I can just show ye! Pass me my coat!" he cried.

He got them to button the coat about his shoulders, with his arms inside and the sleeves empty and dangling. Then on his hands he thrust a pair of clogs. He puffed his cheeks out, blinked rapidly with his eyes, and began to waddle with his hands up and down his bench.

Roars of laughter broke out. That, to be sure, was just Cope—Cope to a T ! It was a'most worth sending a pigeon off for. Cole would never beat that !—And Cole, in an artist's transport, practised little variations.

There was free ale for a month for Cole.

Scarcely less capable of burlesque than the exciseman's gait was the manner in which, coming out of his house, he was wont to bid those about the clogger's shop good-morning. (There was always somebody to bid good-morning to). His wont was to repeat the greeting over and over again, running off into a little diminuendo of "good-mornings," and ending with his "Hn ! hn !" or a little nervous catch of his breath ; and of this, also, the merry clogger made a travesty. Taking the name of his magpie, Jacko Macacco, he practised a string of Macacco—cacco—caccos, until the bird himself caught the trick, and the magpie's final "Hn !" convulsed all who heard it. Then Cole began habitually to double and repeat terminations, often achieving ludicrous accidental results. This again (being a conscientious artist) he developed ; and certain combinations were arrived at of which the syllables, run together and reiterated, made new disreputable words and meanings. On Thursdays the Back o' th' Mooiners would gather in the clogger's shop after the market. Cole would mark spectacles of soot about his eyes, making the resemblance startling. He would button up his coat

and draw on the clogs, and Mish Murgatroyd would laugh till the veins started out on his calf-licked forehead. Once, with clog-soles, they repeated the rhythmic racket of the pieceboards, and the clogger was a little sheep-faced next morning when the exciseman passed ; but Cope greeted him as usual, and stumped down the croft, murmuring his refrain of " Good-morning—morning, morning, morning—ah ! "

Thus the Gazette. Elsewhere the new-comer, if less derisively taken, was not accepted much more seriously. He had confessed to a weakly stomach for liquor ; but he was not averse to sitting for an hour of an evening in the " Cross Pipes," sipping his weak brandy and water, entering once in a while deferentially into the general conversation, and so ready with the hospitality of his snuff-box (though he himself did not snuff), that he seemed a little cringingly desirous of conciliating all the world. That the disproportion of his stature should be less apparent, he invariably sat with his chair drawn close up to the table ; but the presence of dogs beneath the board always disturbed him. On one occasion, when it was jestingly remarked that something must ail his snuff that he did not use it himself, he gave a little snigger, took snuff, sneezed immoderately, and at each sneeze his short legs gave an absurd little kick on the seat of his chair, almost as if a pair of legs should hiccough. They did not roar in his face, as the Gazette would

have done ; but it was tickling all the same. He invariably addressed even the humblest as " Mr."

Once, and once only (if the drawing of his chair up to the table be excepted), he showed sensitiveness, and of that Arthur Monjoy was unwittingly the cause.

They were leaving the " Cross Pipes " one evening together, and had passed to the outer door ; and Monjoy, who was a couple of paces in front, held open the heavy door (which else would have swung to again) in such a manner that Jeremy Cope was compelled to walk under his outstretched arm. It was dark in the entry, but Monjoy heard a little sound as of teeth gritted together, and the excise-man passed under his arm with a foot or so to spare. On the steps he turned to Monjoy.

" That—that, Mr. Monjoy," he stammered, " that was a little gratuitous, was it not ? I think you will agree, Mr. Monjoy——"

" Eh ? " said Monjoy, and suddenly he took his meaning. " Oh, the devil !—Nay, hang me, Cope, if I meant to pain you ! "

" You must pardon me, Mr. Monjoy, if I suggest that you, as compared with most men, are as exceptional as I. I—I—I——"

" Nay, you shall not say another word about it. I was to blame——"

Cope sniggered.

" There, there, there ! Perhaps I was foolish to notice it ; let it pass, Mr. Monjoy——"

And, as the dwarf became conciliatory again, and seemed to dread nothing so much as that the other should renew his apologies, it was odd that what in another man might have been dignity seemed, somehow, something less in him.

At the supper, to which John Emmason, as a magistrate, had been in courtesy bound to invite the new supervisor, there were present, besides three of the Executive (Raikes being left out), John Leedes (a fellow magistrate), and Hemstead, the solicitor. This Emmason was a long-nosed, horse-faced, pompous spoken man, who delivered his opinions with his eyes all but closed, and, when interrupted, waited and resumed again at his own last word. The supper was remarkable on the official, rather than on the social side, and after supper the conversation turned to the subject of certain transferences recently made from the Customs to the Excise. In this connection it would have been neither feasible nor advisable to avoid mention of the proclamation on the pillar of the Piece Hall; and on this Emmason delivered himself sententiously.

"For the two foolish fellows now in York," he pronounced, "although the warrant for their arrest was not of my making out——"

"Parker, of Ford, made it," Hemstead interrupted; "they were seized at the 'Sun Inn'——"

"—of my making out, yet I doubt if a conviction will be obtained. Misguided fellows!—Taken

in most compromising circumstances, Mr. Cope. But the solicitor to His Majesty's Mint informs me . . . hum ! hum ! . . . I can acquaint you with all you may desire to know of that case, Mr. Cope."

"Thank you, thank you, thank you—silly, silly fellows !" Cope murmured.

"Most nefarious !" Emmason assented. "I desire that you will not hesitate to come to me in your need. In regard, now, to any possible line of action you might elect to pursue"

But he could get nothing from the blinking image in the black spectacles. He failed, also, in his hospitable intention of making his guest drunk, and if anybody made a profit out of the occasion, it was not the magistrate.

Before long the company at the "Cross Pipes" had nicknamed the supervisor "Johnny Cope." The name had its rise in certain idle, daffing discussions which the big seal-engraver started, and in which Cope began to bear a share. These topics are of no present moment, save that they were directed humorously at the exciseman, and included the events of thirty years before (in which many had taken part, and all were familiar with). Monjoy usually took the whimsical side in such debates as whether laws were anything more than customs sanctioned ; whether a guinea would be of much use to you in a desert ; whether it would not be a thing patriotic, rather than otherwise, to counterfeit the image of a foreign king (this referred to

the twenty-seven and thirty-six shilling Portugals, current in this country by consent, but not by proclamation), and a deal of similar stuff. These idle pastimes were the means of discovering a new quirk of humour in the puny exciseman. This was to close his eyes, wag his heavy head, pat the air gently away from him with his hand, and say, "La, Mr. Monjoy!"

Whenever the engraver turned up the croft to the shop of Cole the clogger, he took with him some morsel for Jacko Macacco, the magpie—a biscuit, a hard-boiled egg, or a bit of sugar. The bird knew his coming, and, indeed, would answer nobody's whistle but his; and Monjoy had taught it scraps of songs. Among these was an air of which the words began, "*I don't like a Dutchman, I'm damned if I do*"; and he would cry, "No more we do, Jacko; we may as well have it as they, eh?"

One morning he came into the shop, not thinking of the magpie, but whistling the air of *Johnny Cope*. The bird took to it, and after a couple of days (the merry clogger saw to that) the diminutive step of the supervisor down the croft was accompanied by a shrilly whistled, "*Hey, Johnny Cope, are ye waukin yet?*"

One Wednesday evening, nearing the end of March, when the weavers had "felled" for the morrow's market, and Sally Northrop was run nearly off her feet getting ready beef and bread

and cheese, a company sat in the red-curtained parlour of the "Pipes." Every time the door opened the rich smell and crackling of a roasting joint came along the passage from the kitchen, and it had been remarked that the care of the inn was work for more than one pair of hands. Arthur Monjoy, a-straddle on a bench in the middle of the parlour, fanned his face with his foxskin cap, for the room had grown hot and he had been laughing. Matthew Moon, in a corner of the fireplace, was reading bills and letters at arm's-length. John Raikes smoked stolidly opposite him. Some nine or ten others sat round on benches, or in the recess of the window, and Cope's chair was drawn, as usual, up to the table.

As they talked in desultory fashion, there came along the passage a whistled stave of *Johnny Cope*. Cole the clogger entered, and he stood for a moment wondering at the laughter that greeted him. Then he bethought him and laughed also.

"Nay, I must ha' picked it up from th' bird," he said, as he took his seat; and then, somebody else remarking that it was a good song for all that, the talk drifted to the never-stale subject of the '45. (By the way, Scotland itself did not contain a more rampant Jacobite than Dooina Benn. Not that she knew politics from a crow's nest, but because Charles Edward, passing through Carlisle, had stilled his bagpipes opposite the house of a lady brought to bed, and had sent her his saluta-

tions and compliments. "When did yon t'other piece o' pork ever do aught like that?" Dooina would demand.)

All at once, when, among other matters, mention had been made of Hawley's misadventure at Falkirk, the excise officer was seen to be chuckling extraordinarily to himself. His narrow shoulders heaved, he sobbed with his private mirth, and the whole parlour watched in amazement his soft convulsion of delight.

"Come, out with it, Cope!" Monjoy cried, and the exciseman gave a sigh, took off and wiped his glasses, and the edges of his battered purple lids shone with tears.

"Hn! hn! hn! hn! It must seem extraordinary to you, gentlemen, but—hn! hn!—once in a while I cannot resist these attacks. When you spoke of General Hawley—hn! hn!—I was put in mind of a very droll circumstance when he was in France. I will relate it. One day, being among certain of his officers, he said—just as I might have said that our friend who came in whistling was at the door—he said, 'There is a spy coming in from the French army'—no more than that; hn! hn! And so the officers formed themselves into a hasty court-martial, and in a very little while (this is what made me laugh) the man was brought in—on a gallows! Hn! hn! he! he! ho! ho! ho! . . . A little grim, to be sure, grim and droll at the same time, eh? 'Came in!' Yes, he came in . . . ah!"

There was something abominable, unnameable, in his relish of it, and for the moment he himself seemed disconcerted by the dead silence with which his story was received. He still chuckled nervously, as if to outface some hostile impression he had created; and in a minute Monjoy said quietly, glancing towards the door, "You have an extraordinary turn of humour, Cope."

The heavy lids drooped, and Cope's hand patted the air away from his cheek. "La, Mr. Monjoy!" he murmured; but before the gesture was completed, Matthew Moon had advanced to the table, his brows contracted.

"See here, whatever they call ye," he said. "'Grim,' ye said; but it might easy be grimmer. Now just take it on yourself that that's the last tale o' that sort ye tell in this house."

And as Moon strode out, more than one man felt as if a chill hand had passed over his flesh at the thought that Sally Northrop might at any moment have entered the parlour.

Monjoy had followed Moon out. They met on the cobbles.

"Yon man heard what was said at Emmason's about Will and Jim, didn't he?" the merchant demanded.

"Yes," Monjoy replied.

"And he knew that was Jim's house, too; ay, he knew. Yon's mind's as misshapen as his body," the merchant said, and he turned away.

CHAPTER IV.

EASTWOOD ELLAH.

HE was certainly a heartless man who could, in that house, find mirth in such a matter. For five months the key had not been turned in Sally Northrop's door, nor had an evening passed but Sally had set her husband's slippers on the oven and laid his supper lest the door should suddenly open to his push. Week by week the slips of the pillow beside her own had been changed ; and in all other particulars Jim Northrop might have left his house but for an afternoon.

When it became necessary that Sally should have help, Cicely Eastwood had left her carding-wheel and the care of her father's new-dropped lambs and had made her home in the inn, taking on herself the ruling of the house. This arrangement had commended itself to Big Monjoy. She was big, fair, well-nourished and handsome, and so softly embrowned was her skin that her fair hair seemed of a paler yellow than it really was, and her clear eyes and the flash between her lips



were conspicuously white. Her movements were those of a free-limbed lad; her clothing seemed, in some odd way, not something to be doffed for the night, but assumed for the day; and the sight of her had filled Arthur Monjoy with an increasing trouble.

And so, apparently, it had her cousin, deaf Eastwood Ellah, who lived with her father in the house under Wadsworth Scout. He was a short-necked man, with a choleric face, prominent choleric grey eyes, and light hair so closely cropped and so nearly matching his complexion, that, save for a metallic glint on scalp and brow and chin, all would have been of one angry orange hue. His deafness had long isolated him from most society; and he went once in a while into violent "iggs" or unreasonable moods.

There were winks and glances when Cicely Eastwood came to be in Horwick with Sally Northrop. Now, instead of Monjoy's trudges to Wadsworth in order (as they said) to "wind Jim Eastwood's clock up," the boot was on the other leg, and Ellah must come to the "Cross Pipes." It was thought, too, that James Eastwood had taken to heart the parson's parable of the fighting dogs, and that Monjoy would be like to be served before Ellah. And it puzzled folk that the rivalry of the two men should be bound up in a curious off-and-on sort of intimacy.

One of the first signs of this intimacy was that

Monjoy fashioned for Ellah an ear-trumpet of brass. Apart from his trade of engraving, he had some skill in the related crafts of metal-work, and none knew much of how he occupied himself of a night in the garret chamber of Matthew Moon's warehouse up the Fullergate. The low houghing of a pair of bellows could sometimes be heard, and the grinding of a pestle and mortar; but from below nothing could be seen but a pair of closed crane-doors, and the crane-arm above them. When Ellah gave a grunt of thanks for the ear-trumpet, Monjoy laughed and said :

“We'll have a finer one than that when the hazels push on a bit.”

The spring was in truth coming nicely forward, and the gardens and closes of Horwick were budding with plum and cherry and pear. The pear-tree in front of Cope's house had begun to hide the dormers, and a sprinkling of petals lay on the grass-grown cobbles below. In yards, cloth dried on the tenter-hooks; weavers broke their work at midday to lean over walls and watch the fattening of their neighbours' pigs or the fluffy clutches of chickens; and the primroses were out in the deans and on the scanty farms the crows and starlings followed the plough.

It was during this mild and promising weather that, almost every day, Monjoy took the road to Wadsworth, picked up Eastwood Ellah on the way, and ascended the Scout by straggling sheep-

tracks to the high Causeway. Spring, spare and delicate, had touched the moors too, and in the leagues of bloomless heather the birds were nesting, and the dainty white bedstraw and the tiny yellow portantilla peeped among the grey bents. But the two men recked little of the harmonies of russet and grey and airy blue. Monjoy carried in his pocket a hammer and a short iron gavelock, and they grubbed sometimes in the choked bellpits, where the rain still trickled and whispered to the shaft below, sometimes at the dean-heads where the rills slipped down to the valleys, sometimes south over rocky Soyland and the Ridges of Brotherton and Holdsworth, and sometimes up the High Moor itself, where nothing stirred but the sheep and birds and the world seemed to end beyond the next undulation of the waist-high heather. At nightfall they would return to Horwick together, dusty and thirsty, and so lost in earth or lime-rubbings, that Sally Northrop would not have them in her kitchen till they had scraped or drenched themselves. Then they would sit for a couple of hours watching Cicely as she stitched or nursed. Monjoy often left first, and as he put on his coat the muffled knocking of stones would come from his pockets.

Sally, during her own courtship, had known how to set the lamp in the window and to go loitering long ways to the milking or the taking-in of weft; and she favoured Monjoy's wooing scandalously. She was a merry little body still,

save when a word or a look or less put her in mind of Jim ; and she delighted to whisper sly words to Cicely and to watch the flush deepen on her cheek.

"A great red bear !" she would whisper. "I've seen him watching your foot o' the wheel-truddle, and d'ye know what he thinks ? 'A cradle-rocker, not a truddle,' thinks Arthur ; and you dandling Jimmy as if men hadn't eyes an' that !"

"Nay, then, you shall dandle him yourself," Cicely would reply, reddening ; "men needs little 'ticing on in such matters."

"Ye didn't find that out from Arthur, I'll be bound ! Who was it ? . . . Who was it, puss ? . . . Ellah, I'll swear, and I can guess when and where !"

But, though Sally knew well enough that once in a while, of a December or January night, Cicely had taken a watch at her father's lambing-sheds on the moor, not even to Sally would Cicely speak of a certain hour of her cousin's infirmity when, all her nature suddenly disordered and ajar, she had saved herself from his mood, blundering through the dark heather and hearing behind her in the lonely cabin the sounds by which he did violence to himself. Nothing but pure pity for his alienation had entered her heart ; but from that night had dated occasional quick changes in her cheek, as if she surprised something in her own

thoughts that her modesty would not have had there.

The pack-horses that entered Back o' th' Mooin from the Trawden side had to pass, a mile south of Booth, a place called Noon Nick ; and Noon Nick marked the horses of the Trawden pack unmistakably. This Nick was a deep stony gap in the hill where the land had slipped and settled, and the horses had to wind for a quarter of a mile along the extreme edge of a ledge scarce six foot wide, one pack overhanging the gloomy bottom. The trick they picked up from this place was that they would never approach within four foot of any wall. Sometimes a stone, dislodged from the ledge, would roll down the gap, filling the Nick with rattling echoes ; and sometimes the grey stones would start and roll of themselves, with a prolonged and dreary sound.

On a sunny May afternoon there moved down in this bottom Eastwood Ellah and Arthur Monjoy. The grey boulders were bright under the blue sky, and their shadows harshly defined, and near at hand the fractured pieces glinted with tiny metallic pin-points. A few pewits wheeled and piped ; save for them, only the crunch and rattle of the stones underfoot broke the stillness.

Eastwood Ellah's appearance was extraordinary. He was hatless and unbraced, and his feet were bare and cut and covered with blood. His face was crimson, and his prominent glassy eyes stared

unnaturally before him. From out of his pocket peeped his brass ear-trumpet. He perspired violently ; the whole of his scalp twitched with the corrugation of his brows. One hand was outstretched to balance his painful steps ; and in the other he bore that of which Arthur Monjoy, at the meeting of the Executive, had refused to speak—(for the methodical Matthew, who scoffed at ballads, would have ranked this as mere full-moon madness)—the fork of green hazel, the *virgula divina*, the rod that will curl and turn in a man's hands and drip out its sap over the spot where silver lies.

All at once Ellah gave an inarticulate cry, shrill as the crying of the wheeling pewits, and shouted hoarsely : “ I can't—I can't—I tell ye I can't bide it ! ”

“ Can't bide what ? ” Monjoy demanded, turning in an ill humour.

“ The sight o' my own blood. I say I can't—'twill madden me——”

Monjoy led him to a grey boulder, bade him turn his face away, and made such a cleansing of his wounded feet as he was able with a handkerchief. Ellah moaned miserably the while. Monjoy drew on his stockings for him and flung him his boots ; then he began to stride frowning up and down on the harshly grating stones. Presently he returned, plucked the trumpet from Ellah's pocket, and thrust it into his hand.

“ I'll not quarrel,” he shouted curtly, “ but the

Lord made a womanish piece when He made you ! ”

Ellah, the trumpet at his ear, chewed at his lip and whimpered :

“ You know I ha’ my iggs—you ought to pity me, same as others ; the sight of my own blood’s like a flame i’ my brain——”

“ Pity you ! ” Monjoy said contemptuously ; “ you’d have more pity from me if your iggs didn’t always suit your own ends so pat. I know your head-knocking on walls ; how much of it do you do when there’s nobody watching you ? It goes down with women and fools that Ellah’s iggs must be humoured, but in two words, Ellah, my man, you’re a lazy devil, and if you can contrive it to live without working you will. I know your iggs ; you’re the sort that shapes to drown themselves and puts their hands in the water first.”

Ellah, crouched on the boulder, looked stupidly at the stones at his feet. Saliva bubbled at his lips.

“ The rod turned my stomach an’ all,” he complained.

“ Would I ask you to do it if I could do it myself ? Didn’t it twist nearly out of your hands over Holdsworth Head ? ”

“ That was me—I made it,” Ellah moaned.

“ You’re a liar, and you lie now. Will you tell me you vomited on purpose ?—(That’s it, clutch at your face and make as if you were mad !)—

Here are hills that ring with metal to your tread, riddled with old workings, chambers and veins and galleries of it, and only a lazy rogue that's trying to make himself out mad to find it ! ”

“ I can't abide moors,” murmured Ellah, monotonously. “ And th' rod ought to ha' been cut afore sunrise, o' Ladyday, wi' prayers and such. And ye can find it wi'out it, for the grass won't grow over metal, and the trees has blue leaves——” He put the trumpet into his pocket and rocked himself on the boulder.

Monjoy began to stride up and down again. He himself understood nothing of the virtues of the mystic twig save that its operation was not fruitless, and for the rest he had gone to work methodically enough. He knew that the thing had been done before. Patents had been prayed for and granted. Already, by the cunning letting-down of noble ores with inferior, not every mine that was royal in quality had become a Mine Royal ; there was history for it as well as tradition. This was Back o' th' Mooin, too, that had already mulcted the king in his most jealously-guarded prerogative.—Back o' th' Mooin ? A Peru, for all he knew ; and for much less than that his desperate fortunes already involved the stricture of his neck by the hangman's halter. And had he not already proofs in his garret over the warehouse in the Fullergate ? . . . He thrust the trumpet into the deaf man's hand again.

"See!" he bawled; "we're going home now. We're going home, and I'll show you whether we've wasted our time. I'll show you how I've passed my nights this many a month. Do charcoal fumes give you iggs, too? Up!—And mind, it's little more than chance-found stuff so far, poor ore; but poor stuff as it is, with the setting up of crushers and stampers in caves and holes and tunnels, and a furnace sunk in a deep shaft. . . . Up! You shall be the first to see it. Cram these stones into your pockets.—Let me once get going, and Bloody Cumberland himself couldn't rout me out!"

He thrust Ellah roughly down the ravine. They climbed to the Causeway beyond the Nick, and the sheep scampered before them and stood to watch them as they passed. When they reached the bellpits, Monjoy flung out his arm as if he would have spoken, then muttered to himself instead; and he almost carried Ellah along in his haste. It was clear evening before they descended the Scout and passed through Wadsworth; and when they reached Horwick they strode past the "Cross Pipes" and passed quickly up the Fullergate. At the door of Matthew Moon's warehouse Monjoy produced a key.

The cautious merchant had allowed Monjoy the use of the garret at the top of the winding stairs only on certain conditions, the first of which became apparent as soon as the two men entered

the chamber. In the middle of the floor lay what seemed to be a broken bench, for it was without legs at one end, had a couple of strong hooked angle-irons instead, and lay tilted up on the floor. The garret was dark, without window, fireplace, cupboard or shelves. Two sets of double crane-doors only, the one set towards the Fullergate, and the other towards the crofts and gardens and waste ground at the back of the building, made the place anything but four bare walls ; but on a sheet of iron opposite the door a hearth of bricks and a small furnace had been built, and from this proceeded fumes of charcoal for which there was no outlet. Ellah choked immediately ; and Monjoy barred the door.

It was the broken table that was the first of Matthew's precautions. Monjoy dragged it to the door and set the angle-hooks over the heavy bar, making it apparent that he himself could under no circumstances leave the garret without first clearing away the table and all that might lie on it. Monjoy lighted a candle ; then, binding a handkerchief over his own mouth and another over Ellah's, he gave the deaf man to understand that for a few minutes he must submit to have his eyes bandaged. Ellah heard him moving about ; and when, in a few minutes, the bandage was removed again, Ellah saw that the bench that secured and was secured by the door was spread with various appliances, obtained he knew not whence. No engraver's

sandbag, no water globe and burins, however, were there. First, there was a delicate balance ; then a number of test-rings of iron and calcined bone ; then a pestle and mortar ; and after these, pipkins and crucibles, a bowl of quicksilver, a number of small leaden cubes like badly-made dice, and other things. Monjoy emptied his pockets of stones ; then he stripped to his shirt and breeches, and, passing to his hearth, began to revive it with a pair of bellows. The coughing of the bellows and a red glow began to fill the chamber, and Ellah, for all the tight, stifling breathing, watched sharply and eagerly.

Monjoy went about his work in silence, pressing now and then the muffler more closely about his mouth. When the hearth glowed brightly, he set a beam of wood across it, shaped a place in the ashes underneath the billet, and introduced an empty test-ring. He made signs for Ellah to take a turn at the bellows. He began to busy himself at his bench, now grinding small stones with the pestle and mortar muffled in a cloth, now seeing to other matters. The garret became bright as the bellows roared, and unbearably hot, and Ellah dropped the bellows and made for the door, through the chink of which a little air entered. By and by, into the test-ring in the glowing furnace Monjoy introduced one of the little leaden cubes, and plied the bellows more gently. He paid no heed when Ellah stooped over him, and presently

Ellah returned to the door again. Half an hour passed; Monjoy's face streamed, and his eyes were drowsy; and Ellah nodded against the bench by the door. Monjoy roused himself, and with a pair of tongs drew the test from the furnace, setting it to cool. Ellah dozed, and Monjoy crossed over and listened to his breathing. Then he weighed out from his mortar a pound or so of crushed ore, added iron filings to it, set it in a melting-pot in the furnace, and began with the bellows again. An hour passed. The air was well nigh insupportable. He rose again, tottered to his bench, took a deep gulp of water, and stripped off even his shirt. He returned to the bellows; rivulets ran down his giant back; he blundered heavily to the table with the crucible in a pair of tongs and began to dig out the slag; and with the small residue in another ring he crossed again to the furnace and continued mechanically with the bellows. Ellah had fallen across the bench, and slept among the tests and crucibles.

* * * * *

By two o'clock in the morning Monjoy had allowed the furnace to die down again, had extinguished his candle for a few minutes, and had flung open the double doors at the back for air. The cool night restored him, and presently he closed the doors and lighted the candle again. He shook Ellah, who opened his eyes sluggishly, and

Monjoy's voice wheezed as he handed him his trumpet and bade him draw near the candle.

Ranged along the end of the bench were six test-rings. In the little hollow that had been scraped in the bone of each a bead of grey metal lay. The smallest was no more than a sparrow-pellet; two of them would weigh perhaps a couple of penny-weights each; but one dull globule could hardly have drawn on a balance less than half an ounce, while another was only a grain or two smaller. Monjoy's hand was tapping with a regular movement on the first of the rings.

"This," he whispered—for his constricted throat barely emitted a sound, "this—listen your best, for I can't speak louder—this was that blackish clay with the flints, Fluett way, a pound of it—they're all pounds. This one—this is that red earth with pyrites, a mile below the bellpits—I had to get that out with quicksilver—we can throw both those away. . . . Wait a minute. . . . Throw this away, too—that's from Booth—no, Soyland. They're nothing—not one in a hundred, you understand . . . But this, that's three and more in the hundred, is what we picked up to-day—three in the hundred, with all the lead consumed too—you scratched your feet a bit getting this. . . . And the biggest of all, eighty pounds to the ton—Holdsworth Head, where your stomach turned—take it"

He was utterly exhausted, but Ellah had drawn

so near to the candle that his cropped hair singed. His prominent eyes gleamed with an avaricious light.

"Have ye made these to-night?" he said hoarsely.

"No—weeks—weeks—I'll build a furnace, two furnaces, in the Slack . . . a mill to crush it . . . for fuel we'll open up the coal again"

"And is Holdsworth Head made o' this? Did ye say Holdsworth Head?—Ay, lie down a bit."

Monjoy had stretched himself, half-naked as he was, on the floor; he broke immediately into loud snoring. Ellah continued to look, now at him, and now at the beads of silver.

After a while he blew out the candle and stretched himself on the floor by the side of his companion.

CHAPTER V.

THE WADSWORTH WEDDING.

FOR one thing above all others Wadsworth is even yet renowned—its famous wedding. This memorable event came to pass about that time, and it began with the procuring by the new parson from John Emmason, the Horwick magistrate, the list of the King's Hearth Tax.

You have heard of the state in which the parson had found his church, and of the repairs which he had undertaken at his own cost. These repairs had not been effected in a day, nor for that matter in a couple of months ; and Pim o' Cuddy's pigeons still fluttered against the new louver-boards of the belfry, seeking entrance. But the parson had contrived to instil such a fear into his bandy-legged clerk that Pim went in an extreme of penitence and humility ; and for the humours of Pim's re-conversion and of his vacillating conscience—well, Cole the clogger was the man to hear on that.

From the magistrate, then, the parson procured this list. His church being at last ready, maybe

he judged it expedient to make the nearer acquaintance of his parishioners. He set forth on a round of visits.

Then followed something that puzzled the weavers of Wadsworth exceedingly.

At ten o'clock in the morning the parson had begun, and from house to house he had passed during the greater part of the day, talking now with the women in the yards and kitchens, now with the men in the loom-lofts. At five o'clock he had passed quickly up the street, and had been seen to enter his own house almost at a run. That evening he sent for his verger. He asked him this and that, cried aloud on his God, and went to his room without preparing his supper—for he had got rid of his housekeeper and now fended for himself. He came out the next morning still fasting, and was seen to ascend the Scout, and to disappear in the direction of the Causeway; and about mid-day a packman, leaving his string of horses with lime from Fluett at the top of the Scout, came down into Wadsworth, and reported that beyond Holdsworth Head he had heard lamentations, and, stepping aside, had seen a man on his knees in prayer.

That was on the Friday. On the following Sunday morning, in the renovated church, the parson made an announcement. Only half a dozen women and a lad or two heard it, but hardly was the Benediction out of his mouth, before, with incredible speed, it was all over the village,

and already on its way to Horwick. It was this : That, to make (in effect) the best of a very bad job, thenceforward all marriage fees would be remitted, and the clerk's proper perquisite would be paid out of the same canvas bag that had already provided the money for the new floorboards and windows and the rest of the repairs to the fabric of the church.

Well, the first thought of all that entered folks' heads was ; What did the parson stand to gain ? They screwed up their eyes knowingly ; you couldn't catch Wadsworth folk napping ; as sure as a club, there was something in it. A few incredulous ones shook their heads. It couldn't be right ! A crown piece for Pim o' Cuddy for each wedding ? Parsons were not much readier than other folk to part with crown pieces for nothing, not they ! More would appear by and by. The parson might be deep, but——

And so forth, measuring the parson's peck out of their own bushel. It was decided to await events.

But as time went on it did not become much clearer what profit could accrue to the parson, and the fact remained that, body or soul, something was offered for nothing. One couple only had taken the parson at his word, and had had the spurrins read ; and when, a little later, they were safely married, it was in the presence of all Wadsworth, half Holdsworth, and more than a few from

Horwick, assembled as if for a sign and wonder. The swain was not required to put his hand into his pocket, and, journeying to Horwick next day, Pim o' Cuddy passed his new crown piece round a company gathered in the shop of Cole the clogger.

"It's a right eniff crown," Cole remarked, half convinced of the parson's disinterestedness, but wholly persuaded of his folly; and John Raikes, who had dropped in from the fulling-mill, took the coin.

"I suppose I can keep it while to-morrow?" he said, making a movement of his hand towards his pocket.

An extraordinary agitation became apparent in Pim o' Cuddy's face, and his voice faltered.

"Sich wark belongs to th' Devil, 'at I've put at th' back o' me, John," he said uneasily, and Cole the clogger winked at the goitred fuller.

"To be sure it does, Pim," he said solemnly. "For an extra sixpence, who'd loss th' ease o' his conscience? Give it him back, John, and don't tempt him. Sixpence? Nay, it might naughbut be fourpence. Give it him back."

"He hasn't asked for it yet," said Raikes, grinning; and Pim o' Cuddy, in his misery, reckoned up that probably other couples would get married; that a few weddings would soon make the difference of another crown; that after all, he had no precise knowledge of what John Raikes would do with the coin. . . .

"Here, tak' it," said John, grinning again; and involuntarily Pim made a gesture of refusal.

"Nay, John—" he stammered, "if ye want a crown while to-morrow—for some godly purpose—it isn't neighbourly to refuse it—but al'ays tak' heed to your steps, John! . . . Now I've wondered many a time if a sixpence wad go down th' spout o' that little brass kettle o' mine o' th' chimley-piece—I think a sixpence wad a'most go down. . . ."

The magpie joined in the roar of laughter with a shrill cackle.

Another couple (at the parson's urgent request) had the spurrins read; and the event that shortly followed coming to Cole's ears, the clogger made as much of it (while all who heard him writhed in fits and convulsions of laughter) as if in the mere ceremony and solemnization of a union there lay some miraculous virtue and speed and efficacy. Again Pim o' Cuddy temporised with the Adam within him, and again it was suggested by John Raikes that in order to introduce a sixpence into the brass kettle it was not necessary to remove the lid. And then, nobody volunteering for a full week to put a third crown into his pocket, Pim himself began to experience qualms lest his own marriage, a score of years ago, should not have been regularly blessed and sanctioned.

"I doubt if him 'at wed us were ever right ordained a parson," he said, troubled in spirit:

"I ha' it on my mind he were no better nor one o' these broomstick chaps—and th' wife can't think on——"

"I should wed a fresh 'un next time," they advised him.

"Don't mak' droll wi' holy things," Pim adjured them. "I feel as if I couldn't live another day wi'out making sure——"

And on the following Sunday he hung his head, shamefast, in the clerk's desk, while the parson, at the other end of the church, required of those who knew of any impediment why Pim o' Cuddy and the woman called Mrs. Pim o' Cuddy should not be joined in matrimony that they should declare the same. The parson was past niceties now.

After that, half the village flocked to be married.

The end of May is always a stirring time Horwick and Wadsworth way, for on the 29th there falls due the Horwick Spring Fair, and within a fortnight or so the sheep-shearing begins. Strangers come to Horwick for the fair, and for three days the piece-boards are converted into stalls for all manner of merchandise, and a big field off the Fullergate is given over to clowns and vagabond players and tumblers, who perform in tents or on wooden stages. All is noise and bustle and gaiety; and that spring, in addition, these weddings were being celebrated almost every day, each with its private feast. Sweethearts and mothers and grandmothers, young men from the looms and old men from the pastures

and scanty farms, all were for the churching ; there was never anything like it. For the women, some of them had wedding-rings that, nevertheless, had not been put on their fingers in the presence of any priest ; some wore rings of their mothers', or of their mothers' mothers ; and for another batch Pim o' Cuddy (now very well married indeed, and, moreover, living in intimacy with his wife again) was despatched for the new key of the church door. They stood in the building that their dogs and fowls and ferrets had made profane for them ; they shuffled their feet on the new floor-boards ; they glanced uneasily at the scratched and disfigured pillars ; and children stood up the mountainous Scout to peer in at the windows. Their neighbours gave them in marriage, or they received the service at the hands of Pim o' Cuddy ; and men took to be their wedded wives and to live together the women whose sons and daughters awaited the same Ordinance and their turn to take on themselves the same solemn vows. And all the time the Horwick streets were thronged, and the inns filled to overflowing, and the Back o' th' Mooiners, coming down on the Wednesday or Thursday, did not return to their hills till the Saturday or Sunday.

It was worth something, in those days, to hear Cole the clogger make sport of Dooina Benn. For Dooina, with her times and seasons, was utterly lost and bewildered. The clogger, winking at those

about him, gave her the news of the marriage of a couple whose ages together totted up to a hundred and twenty or thereabouts, and bade her mark it on her calendar ; and poor Dooina could hardly have told plantain from ivy-berries, which are the best and worst things wedded folk can make use of. During this comedy the supervisor of excise came out of his door at the top of the croft ; with all this marrying, the supervisor could not be left out ; and the Back o' th' Mooners writhed on Cole's bench and clicked their clogs feebly with delight when Cole suggested that no fitter mate could be found for the dwarf than fat Dooina herself. The jest became current within an hour.

On the second day of the feast Arthur Monjoy came upon Cope in the fair-field ; the exciseman was talking to a couple of strangers behind a tent.

" Ah, Cope," Monjoy cried ; " what's this news I hear of you and Mrs. Benn ? "

" Ah, Monjoy ! " Cope replied absently, as a man answers to an interruption he has scarce heard. " Eh ? . . . Yes, yes ; hn ! hn ! You are such a one for your jest, Mr. Monjoy ! " He patted the air softly away from him again, and Monjoy passed on without noticing that he had for once omitted the deferential " Mr. "

The big engraver, too, was not untouched by this gale of universal espousals. Cicely Eastwood was a Wadsworth lass, eligible to be married in Wadsworth. Not all these amazing nuptials were of

flesh so fair and fresh as hers ; and a Wadsworth wedding that left Cicely single and a maid would have been like to break Dooina Benn's heart. Arthur Monjoy sought an occasion.

Cicely was to have left Sally a fortnight before, but the fair had so crowded the "Pipes" every evening that even with a couple of extra men her help was no more than was needed. She was in and out of the parlour, and her colour was brighter and deeper, as, indeed, that of every marriageable lass seemed to be. The parlour discussed her openly, almost before the door had closed behind her ; and when one man, speaking of her two suitors, remarked that "a loom only wanted one shuttle," it was pretty well settled among them that Monjoy was like to be the shuttle.

He found her in the kitchen one evening cutting up great loaves and cheese, and breaking off every minute to answer a knock or shout. He flung his cap into the window-seat, and she looked up and smiled, but did not speak. He perched himself on the end of the table, watching her housewifely occupation, and thinking, maybe, that her hand was as much made to divide a loaf as her foot to press a rocker. A call summoned her to the parlour ; and when she returned it was to find him cutting clumsily at the cheese—for he had lately burnt his hand. Sally was upstairs, and they were singing in the parlour.

"Nay, let me do it," she said, putting forth her

hand for the knife ; and Monjoy took her hand as if it were quite a natural thing to do. She seemed as little constrained.

"Where's Ellah ?" he asked.

"He was here an hour ago. Oh, let me get on, Arthur !"

"Do you want him here—now ?" he said, drawing her nearer to him.

"I don't want any of you, this busy," she replied ; but as she became suddenly conscious, her colour deepened, and her hair seemed startlingly fair against it. There was a rising hubbub outside in the market-place.

"Listen !" she cried ; "here are more coming !" She drew away her hand swiftly and ran out. She returned with a pile of platters, and pushed at the door with her knee, steadied the platters, and guided the closing of the door with her foot, all in one busy gesture.

"They're on from the 'Fullers,' shouting for supper.—Nay, not now, Arthur !—"

But he did not withdraw the arm he had placed about her, and his great red bear's head was close to her cheek. "Will you, Cis ?" he said, huskily.

"Oh, reach me that butter ! Nay, I've knocked your hand.—Will I what ?"

"Marry me——"

"Yes, yes—reach me another loaf from yon pot——"

"And when, dear ?"



THE WADSWORTH WEDDING. 71

“Oh, go, go! They’ll be in here in a minute. Another time—in the morning—go, and send Harry——”

The noise of steps was heard along the passage. He caught up his cap and started for the door, not wishing her to be found with him. Suddenly she stepped backward to the passage door, pushed the bolt, and lifted her head. He darted towards her. She gave him her cheek, pushed back the bolt at the same instant, and he disappeared as the door opened.

Thus hurriedly, for Cicely Eastwood, came and went her delicious moment.

After that, not the clogger’s shop only, but half Horwick and all Back o’ th’ Mooin were abuzz with the news. The strict three days of the spring fair were over, but Horwick seemed as if it would never know the sober traffic of a Thursday again. Far into the warm nights lads and men sat on the piece-boards and drank ale. James Eastwood was boisterously complimented on the winding up of his clock. The jest of Cope and fat Dooina was renewed, and Eastwood Ellah, it was said, had been seized with another igg and had talked loudly and disjointedly in the middle of the Fullergate. The wedding was fixed for the second week in June; that was also the appointed time for the shearing of Eastwood’s sheep, and one supper was to celebrate both events.

The wedding morning broke hot and cloudless,

with a sky of midsummer blue and larks invisible in it singing tirelessly. The bell in the squat belfry at Wadsworth began to ring at eight o'clock in the morning, and up the Shelf from Horwick and down the Scout from Back o' th' Moooin hundreds of people poured. From behind the houses at the top of the village, where a stream had been dammed for the washing that had taken place the day before, came the constant calling of penned sheep; and now and then a man passed up the street with a bucket of tar or ruddle for marking. You could hardly get into the "Gooise" for drinkers and merrymakers, and a throng as dense filled James Eastwood's yard, where three tables were already set up. Matthew Moon had come, little in his way as were women and weddings; and to top all, Monjoy had taken no refusal but Jeremy Cope must come also.

The parson passed from his house at a quarter-past eleven; but no sooner had he set foot in the church but out he came again, beside himself with indignation. The church was a tumult of laughing and shouting and hilarity. Pim o' Cuddy was fetched from the bellrope and sternly bidden to announce that there would be no wedding, and Pim fled from the ire in the parson's face. His appearance in the clerk's desk was the signal for a shout; and in consternation, Arthur Monjoy, who had but just arrived, sought the parson. The parson was already half way to his own house.

"Be off, if you are he!" the parson cried; "or bow your back to the pillars, as Samson did, that God's defiled house may overwhelm you all together!"

But Monjoy's own rage and remorse were so apparent, and he besought the parson so movingly for one minute in which he himself might restore order, that the parson cried, "I give you three minutes, then; but if so much as a whisper reaches my ears——" Monjoy was gone. Before the parson had fairly turned back, the engraver, coiner, forger, unlicensed smelter of metals, was in the clerk's desk and Pim o' Cuddy was pitched into the arms of the horde below. As he stood there, it was hardly too much to say of him that he looked a king, a barbarian king of some older time, who made laws with his eye and executed them with his hand.

"Have you done?" he roared.

At his wrathful voice the tumult fell.

"Take those caps off!"

There was a movement, every cap was removed, and Monjoy's head moved arrogantly from side to side.

"Now. He who moves hand or foot settles with me. When the words 'Let us pray' are pronounced, you will kneel, and you will remain kneeling till the Amen. There's none here who doesn't know me; he doesn't know me who doesn't do this. When *my* head bows and *my* knee bends, by this house and its Master, yours shall!"

A moment longer he stood in the desk, and then left it amid such a silence that the calling of the sheep away by the dam could be heard. They fell from before him as he passed out of the church again; he reappeared alone at the altar, his back to the congregation. Presently Cicely and James Eastwood appeared, the parson following.

The now familiar service was brief. Obediently as children, docile and uncomprehending as children, Back o' th' Mooin knelt for the prayer. An Amen or two, well-nigh forgotten, rose to lips as the parson ceased; and then they rose again. The parson gave out a couple of verses of a hymn; only Pim o' Cuddy and a few others sang it, but all stood in imitative attitudes of reverence, just as at the pieceboards they had imitated gestures of ridicule and derision. They passed out of the church and put on their caps again, and the chief actors entered the vestry where the registers were.

In the afternoon the sheep were shorn and turned off again up the Scout, where they bleated continually. The grey fleeces were stacked in James Eastwood's yard, and a great drinking and carousing was toward in the "Gooise," where the parlours and passages were so packed that the ale for the shearers had to be passed out of a window. The noise increased as the afternoon wore on. Mish Murgatroyd, Dick o' Dean, and certain others, wishing to know what Cope the supervisor weighed,

set him on a pair of wool-scales amid uproarious applause—six and a half stone—“six for th’ body and th’ odd half for his legs.” You could have told where Monjoy was by the cheers that rose from time to time. Cicely and Sally and Dooina Benn appeared at an upper window, and there was more cheering; but the biggest cheer of all came when Cicely and Arthur rose hand in hand at the supper-board and Arthur tried to thank them all. But there was no hearing him for the din, and he sat down again. The parson, still in righteous dudgeon (and, maybe, having his own opinion of the big bridegroom’s method of obtaining order in the church), had looked in for a minute and withdrawn again; but as he passed the gate of the yard there arose another tow-row, and half a dozen Back o’ th’ Mooiners brought in Jeremy Cope on a hurdle, as if for a stang-riding, and shuttered him off on to a pile of fleeces. “Fotch Dooina tul him!” they cried; and Cope mopped and mowed and blinked his purple lids. Monjoy rescued him from Dooina’s arms. It grew late. Over the Scout the moon rose mild and yellow, and they began to leave Eastwood’s yard and to assemble in the square outside the “Gooise.” Some began to ascend the sheep-tracks of the Scout, but the most remained till morning, when there was a great swelling and sousing and freshening-up at the horse-troughs. During all the following day they straggled homewards, to celebrate Red Monjoy’s wedding in their

own fastnesses ; and two days later there came word of rejoicings still continued at Booth, where, with fantastic rites, the effigies of Monjoy and Cicely had been crowned and enthroned, King and Queen of Back o' th' Mooin.

CHAPTER VI.

EMMASON.

FROM John Emmason, the magistrate, circuitously through James Eastwood (who, better than anyone else, had the magistrate's humour), came a word that set Matthew Moon's brows a-pucker and started him pacing with his fists doubled deep in his breeches pockets. Emmason, meeting the flockmaster near the Piece Hall, had put it after his own fashion.

"Willis is looking very well," he had remarked, allowing his eyelids to flutter and fall.

Eastwood's own eyes had narrowed suddenly. "Who is?" he had asked.

"Willis. Parker's clerk at Ford. I saw him in conversation with our supervisor on one of the feast days."

"Oh, aye?" Eastwood had replied. "Well, your health's a grand thing to keep. . . . How if me and Matthew was to look in for a bit of a chat this evening, John?"

"You'd be very welcome, James," the magistrate had answered; and Eastwood had straightway sought Matthew Moon.

They repaired to the magistrate's house at eight that evening; they found him in his blandest mood. His lids drooped more than ever; his finger-tips met silkily; and he rang for wine.

"We must have wine," he remarked. "You, James, or your daughter, or our good friend Monjoy (or all three), are to be congratulated, I believe? We must drink their healths. A happy event! I should have liked well to assist at the ceremony, but business—His Majesty's business——"

"To be sure; I thank ye, John. Ay, there were stirrings; ye'd ha' laughed to see Cope o' th' pile o' fleeces——"

"Ah, Cope was there? An oddity, that man; a crooked sort of personage; a man, I should say, not readily understood."

Matthew Moon was frowning at his untasted wine. He looked up.

"What's that you told James about Cope?" he demanded; and again the magistrate's horse-face grew bland.

"I told James? Surely not! . . . Ah! I remember; I did mention that Willis seemed in excellent health and spirits. A very capable fellow, that Willis—zealous. I wish I had his like for a clerk. A clerk who can be trusted on a delicate errand——"

“What sort o’ delicate errand ?” Moon demanded again ; and the magistrate’s brows rose.

“—who can be trusted on a delicate errand, why, I’ve been looking for one this five years !”

James Eastwood nudged the merchant that he should hold his peace ; and by and by the magistrate hummed softly, as if at something interior to himself, and punctuated his remarks with delicate touchings of his fingers.

“Hum, hum ! Do you happen, James (but possibly you won’t)—do you happen to remember a conversation we had a little while ago, about saying Yes when No is meant ?—Surely it was to you I was speaking of that ?”

“To be sure,” said Eastwood (though he remembered no such thing). “It’s odd ye should mention it, for I was thinking of it to-day. I’ve oft noticed that to speak o’ things seems in a way to bring ’em about a’most.”

“Ah ! I thought my memory had not failed me ! Well, I had an instance only this morning, a trifle of business ; briefly, it was this : Among my many letters was one from the solicitor to the Mint ; two letters, to be precise, and they come pat on that conversation of ours. I was struck by the way in which these highly-placed law-officers can talk (so to put it), and say nothing. You will excuse me that I do not show you the letters themselves ; and certainly I expected news in them. Perfectly formal, courteous letters—” he mused

long, "—and yet so entirely superfluous as almost to seem blinds—puttings-off—" His eyes closed; he seemed to be tasting something delicate on his tongue; and Matthew Moon opened his mouth to speak. Again Eastwood nudged him.

"Ay," said the flockmaster unctuously, "when letters doesn't say anything ye ha' to be sharpish to understand 'em."

"Yes—yes and no," mused the magistrate. "Ah, this Law!—You make a full confession of a thing, the Law finds it insufficient; you deny, and the Law murmurs 'Indeed?' and presently takes you by the heels. I have long letters sometimes, full of words, and all they say is this 'Indeed?'—And so much for our recent conversation, James."

This time Matthew Moon struck bluntly in.

"Do ye mean, i' plain words, that they're setting ye aside?" he said; and at that moment an accident befell the magistrate's glass of wine. It overturned at his elbow, and Emmason rose hastily for a napkin. He dabbed up the spilt liquid, and then crossed to the window, putting his hand against the crack of the shutter.

"I think the wind is north, for this room is uncommonly draughty," he muttered. "You will pardon me, I'm sure, but I am just recovering from an ear-ache—" He took some morsels of cotton-wool from his pocket and stuffed them into his ears.

The merchant made a little exclamation of contempt, and turned to Eastwood.

"Is that it, James?" he asked, while the magistrate inspected the cornice of the room.

"Nay, if ye will come in like that——"

"Does he mean Cope's trafficking wi' Ford magistrates and leaving ours alone?"

"Why won't ye leave John to me?"

"No need; it's plain enough. We've been looking west instead o' east, that's all." (The magistrate nodded, and immediately seemed to doze, nodding again twice or thrice.) "There's the Gazette at the clogger's, with its pigeons and creeping about and all that, that's all west; and east, there's them I warned ye o' before, that'll ha' nothing to do with us, and Ford, and a Ford magistrate's clerk i' Horwick.—His legs don't amount to much, but he can get letters, and sit in the 'Pipes' all ears, and set fools sniggering with his 'La, Mr. Monjoy!'"

"Well, let me get what I can out o' John."

"Ay, let's have the clever work."

Eastwood rose, set his hand for a moment to the crack of the door, and returned to Emmason.

"Ye're wrong, John; it's from the door, not the window. Come and sit between us," he said.

The magistrate took the wool from his ears and changed his place, and while the others rested their elbows on the table he leaned back between them. Eastwood began the farce slowly.

"It's come over me this bit back, John," he said deliberately, "that there's a deal o' queer

work goes on i' Horwick that folk knows little about."

"Ay?" murmured the magistrate. "And in what sort?"

"Well, say there's poaching. A man i' your position doesn't hear tell of it, but it's spoken of openly among us. Magistrates can't be everywhere."

"No, no; we occupy a difficult position," Emma-son assented; but the slow shake of his head said a good deal more. It said (for instance) that, if in truth he were officially discredited, zeal against poachers would hardly reinstate him.

"Then, there's more nor a bit o' smuggling along th' Causeway, fro' the Lancashire ports," Eastwood suggested, tentatively; and again Emma-son shook his head.

"The person to inform of that is Cope," he said.

"True, true," said Eastwood; and when again he spoke it was very slowly indeed.

"The Law, ye say, doesn't al'ays take plain speech; well, there's another thing, that ye'd best not take official till ye know more.—Now and then th' coin's been tampered wi'."

"Are you sure the draught was from the door?"

"Ay, ay; come a bit closer this way.—Now, if that's so, ye ought to be informed; and supposing ye were to show some knowledge, as I

might say, to the authorities—to interest 'em, like—then happen there'd be fewer letters wi' this 'Indeed?' in 'em."

Emmason sat suddenly upright in his chair.

"You cannot mean to suggest to me, James, that in the event of any evidence being produced against such person or persons and so forth—that I should ever think of disregarding such evidence?"

Eastwood spoke with indescribable dryness—"I said information, not evidence," he murmured; "it's a rum thing, is th' Law."

Emmason leaned slowly back again. He ceased to set his finger-tips together, and his eyes gazed steadily at the reflection of the candles in the polished table. Eastwood watched him furtively; Moon had not moved. The magistrate began to murmur, neither quite aloud nor quite to himself; and the expression on Eastwood's face became one of deep abstraction. All the world is agreed that when a man's musings are overheard the secrecy of them remains inviolable; it is a nicer point whether or not you may rule your conduct by the light of any information they may contain. Only by the acutest attention could John Emmason's murmurings have been overheard; but they were something like this: "If it isn't too late—if they'll still listen to me—I could approach Cope before he gets too deep with Parker—yes, to show a little knowledge—ah! . . ."

* * * * *

Between Matthew Moon and the flagitious magistrate little love was lost, and Moon's view of the case was laid before the Executive two days later, at a meeting in an upper room of the "Gooise" at Wadsworth.

"I was jealous of it at first; I am more than jealous now. Listen," he said with great earnestness. "A gauger without legs, that can't knock about and keep an eye on things, what good is he? And that's the sort they've sent to Horwick. Why, think ye? I've a wit o' my own, with the fancy-work left out, and I know what it *might* be.—Suppose he *wants* us to make light of him, and to be the jest of every lad in the market-place, till we say, 'Tut, it's only Cope'; and then suppose he's listening and hedge-creeping, and setting a knot here and a knot there, like poachers wi' pheasants—what then?"

"You go too fast," said Monjoy. "It may be that Emmason's being passed over; we're not sure of that yet; but even to think it would cast John down a bit."

"John's as cast down as you're set up, Arthur, wi' the pomp o' this grand scheme o' yours. You're not the fittest man for a counsellor just now—leaving out ye're newly wed."

"No?" said Monjoy with a laugh. "Fit or not, I've got a hillside of ore to go at, and laid out the foundations of two furnaces, and got the fire-brick made and the stone to the spot and men just

starting to work day and night. That was a ballad, if I remember ; but never mind that. You're out o' health, Matthew ; perhaps you've some trouble we know nothing of."

"Finish your say."

"Here's Emmason going over to give Parker a neighbourly call. If all Emmason wants is to put up a show of zeal, we can manage that for him. An old die or two planted here and there won't do any harm, and he can give Cope a search-warrant, all as fair as the day. That'll amuse Cope in Horwick, and we're not going to invite him this side of Wadsworth."

"Have you finished ?" Moon asked.

"Why, what ails you, Matthew ?"

"Because if ye have, I'll ask ye this : Who's been watching Cope lately ?"

"I've been watching something better worth while," Monjoy returned.

"Maybe ; but I'll tell ye what I've seen, that won't hurt ye to know. I said before yon's mind was as ill-shapen as his body ; listen : he's a man-eater, and hyænas laugh like him. There's no man's blood in yon. He lets ye shoot your spittle at him, and laughs just the same. What was it he laughed at first in the 'Pipes' ? I see ye remember. I began to watch him after that, and I'll back my own wits against Emmason's clot o' sized warps, for all the fancy-work. I've seen him licking round at ye all with his filthy

eyes, choosing men to fit the white cap wi' the black strings on and reckoning how many widows there'd be. Ay, I've seen his eyes feeding on *that* !—" He pointed suddenly to John Raikes's great neck.

"What !" cried Raikes, with a hoarse oath, starting suddenly up, while his chair tumbled behind him.

"Ay, and he's leered at Sally bringing in ale, and at Cicely, too, by God !—We've no grand new furnaces in Horwick, but there's odds and ends to watch. They weighed him at the shearing: how many of us has he weighed, and measured the rope for, with his watch in his hand ? "

John Raikes gave a cry to drown his words. "Whisht, whisht !" he shouted.

"Ay, I've touched ye, have I ? That's Cope. Don't trust my eyes ; come and see. Come and see the busiest man in Horwick. Ye're going to bide what happens, are ye ? See ye don't bide too long. What Emmason's going to do he must do quick, and James, that can talk his daft talk, must see to it. Don't tell me I've troubles ye know nothing about ; ye've heard my trouble."

John Raikes was pale, and he was clenching and unclenching his hands. Eastwood's crafty face was anxious and drawn into corrugations. Monjoy fiddled with his russet whiskers. Moon's speech had set a load on their spirits. But soon Monjoy began to come round. He remembered the mer-

chant's habitual caution and lack of enterprise, his attachment to filing and clipping and sweating and such small matters, and quickly his own hazardous venture filled his mind again.—It was the obtaining of fuel that troubled him chiefly. Ore he had, and labour, and the security of the hills, but unless fuel was to be had near at hand . . . but there must be coal still unworked . . . there would be much to do before the furnaces were finished that did not need his immediate supervision, and he would see about the coal. . . . He was as thoughtful as the others, tapping his fingers on the table; but the merchant's words were already out of his mind.

“Give me two months, if this weather holds,” he cried suddenly, “and Johnny Cope shall think we’ve coined the big blessed silver moon herself! By heaven! if we stick for fuel, the lads shall bring their loom-timbers for the first fire! We’ll weave a shalloon with a ring and music in it! What? —Then, some Horwick way, some Trawden, and we’ll run it, rund and bar, down the Pennine to Sheffield, and Nottingham, and Derby, where Charlie turned back. . . . An ilion-end for the Elector! What, lads?”

He was on his feet, his arms extended, and the three looked at his red radiant countenance as if it had suddenly become unfamiliar.—“What, lads?” he cried again; and Matthew Moon rose.

“I’ve said my say,” he said. “There’s no

talking to Arthur ; but you, John, keep in mind what I told you. I'll stand by the Exec'tive as long as I'm on it, and now I'll go and look after these things that doesn't matter so much in Horwick. Good night."

The door closed behind him, and his heavy tread was heard on the stairs. Soon the others were deep in the discussion of the details of Big Monjoy's dangerous undertaking.

CHAPTER VII.

CICELY.

THE summer grew hot and rainless, and the Horwick mills stood for want of water. In Wadsworth you could no longer tell the day of the week by the knocking of the looms—the lazy throw of the shuttle that began the week from the frantic clatter of “felling” on the eve of the Thursday market—for the weavers worked only early in the mornings and late into the night, and dozed during the afternoons. Not a breath stirred the birches and mountain-ash of the Scout; and the blue-flowering teasel-thistles, that the fullers set in iron frames for the raising of a nap on their cloth, stretched up the steep hillside like a dusty, slaty, ethereal bloom.

Arthur Monjoy had taken a small house in Horwick, but every night he was over the moor, and, until he should cease his setting out at nightfall and returning at daybreak, Cicely remained in her father's house. Eastwood Ellah, who for a week

after the wedding had slept none knew where, had returned. He sat in his old place by the chimney corner, watching Cicely as before ; and sometimes, when he went upstairs, the jarring of his loom would sound through the greater part of the night. Once or twice only had he gone forth with Monjoy ; he now seemed to dislike the moor, and, indeed, open spaces generally ; and when he was not in the chimney corner he was usually in bed sleeping the clock round.

Cicely, at the time when the parson, with the list of the Hearth Tax in his hand, had made his famous round of visits, had been with Sally in Horwick, and she had scarcely his acquaintance. But she was now so frequently passing up the street, or across the square, that an acquaintance grew of itself, and he often stood in conversation with her. He usually asked after her husband ; and one broiling afternoon he suggested to her that there was no cooler place than the church to which he was going. She accompanied him, and they sat down on the hindermost bench.

Again he asked after her husband. " I trust he is not one of those who think that a churchgoing on their wedding-day is once too often," he said, frankly admiring her.

" He doesn't talk to me about it," Cicely replied reservedly, and the parson kneaded his knuckles and gazed thoughtfully at one of the floor-boards.

" He seems to have extraordinary authority

over a class of people not exactly his own," he remarked by and by.

"Ay, they think a lot of him," she answered evasively.

"Yes. . . . If he could be persuaded to come to church, a good many others would follow, I imagine. It is what I intended to ask you this afternoon. Do you think he could be persuaded?"

Cicely smiled a little. "It's all what sort of a persuader ye are," she said.

"Or you yourself are?" he suggested. "Suppose you were to come; he might come with you."

"He might; ye'd better put it to him."

"I should like you to do that. Think: you, a young wife, can do much with a word; what he does, others will do; and in your hands more than in anybody's it rests to turn this barbarous parish to the fear of God. Or, let me put it another way. . . ."

He talked earnestly, but Cicely shook her head from time to time. He asked her questions—he was exceedingly curious regarding her husband; she allowed him to remain so. She displayed no great fervour about attending church herself; but to that he half persuaded her. In half an hour she rose; again he noted her handsome colour and magnificent carriage, and he knew that if his end was to be gained, he was beginning in the right quarter. They left the church together.

Thereafter they had many conversations, and Cicely attended church intermittently; but she refused to attempt to influence her husband.

Ellah never used now the ear-trumpet that Monjoy had given him, and there were symptoms that his moroseness was bringing on another igg. It came, a flood of excited babbling that all the world was against him, and so forth, and Cicely put him into his chair and smoothed his brow with her hands. The touch seemed to bring him relief, and once, when she pressed his hot temples, he seemed to sleep, but opened his eyes and muttered when she ceased. He was persuaded that he was spied on, that the most unlikely folk had malign influence over him, and that half the village had gone off their heads; and one afternoon, as Cicely bathed his throbbing temple-arteries with water, he suddenly said, "I wouldn't lay a finger on ye, lass, not ever so." He recovered, and began to show a passionate fondness for roast pork.

The heat continued, so that paint blistered on wood and the tar glistened and bubbled on the roofs of sheds; and, maybe, the heat was the cause of the softening of moral fibre that became apparent in Pim o' Cuddy, the verger and bellringer. More than once he was caught hugging to his breast the little brass kettle, under the lid of which he slipped the crown-pieces and down the spout the sixpences of usury; and then one night Arthur Monjoy took him over the moor. That marked a sad period.

Thenceforward two men struggled within him. The clerk contemned worldly riches, but Pim o' Cuddy chuckled "Ho! ho!" to himself at odd moments, rubbed his palm against wood, and made no secret of the dilly-spoons and weaving-candlesticks he would have, all of heavy silver, at no distant date. "A silver wedding too, Pim—don't forget that," they rallied him.

Many now took the pack-causeway by night. Probably the only man in the village who was ignorant of what was toward was the parson; but they laughed, and said that parsons were all alike in that. Eastwood Ellah's iggs were treated with a sort of respect; there was something in an igg like that; and one or two were by no means sure that he could not, if he had wished, have produced not silver, but gold.

Whether from her conversations with the parson or not, Cicely became thoughtful, and sat sometimes for half an hour at her roving-wheel, not working, but turning her wedding-ring round and round on her finger. Arthur had made the ring himself; whence the gold, she knew very well; and as she turned it, an uneasiness seemed to communicate itself to her from the gold hoop. One afternoon she spoke of this to him.

He had just risen, not having gone to bed till broad day, and she sat on the edge of his unmade bed, turning the ring again. Presently, without looking up, she said, "Arthur, dear—" He took

her on his knee, and she made herself small against his breast.

"What is it, Cis?" he asked, his great hand wandering in her bright hair; and she drew the ring slowly back and forth to the end of her finger.

"I don't feel, somehow, right wed, Arthur," she said timorously.

"What!" he exclaimed, trying to see her face. "But there's many a lass would like to be as well wed as this! What's the matter, Cis?"

"I don't know . . . 'tis the ring. . . . Do you love me a deal, Arthur?"

"Kiss me. . . . Do I what?"

"And would you get me another ring if I was to want it very much?"

"Why, what ails this one?"

"I don't know. . . . Buy me another, Arthur. Buy me one of a right goldsmith, paid for wi' earned money. 'Tis silly, but I shall do many silly things afore we're old together."

Again he raised her chin. "Tut! I've left you too much alone, dear; but in another week or two— Open your mouth . . . "

She did so, adorably, and he put such a noisy kiss there as a mother gives to her babe. But she persisted.

"Will you, love? 'Tis very little!"

"You shall have all the rings you want by and by."

"Ah, I don't want that, not that way.—Well,

I'll pay you for it now, with a kiss : then I shall have it, shan't I ? ”

“ Rogue ! ” he answered, enfolding her.

But within a couple of days she had another request to make of him, and that was that they might go to their own house in Horwick at the earliest moment. She gave as her reason for this that she might be helpful to Sally Northrop, and he frowned.

“ Sally's managing well enough, and you can't go alone. Are you unhappy here ? ”

She answered looking away. “ I'm happy where my husband is.”

“ Has anything upset you ? ”

“ No, no.”

“ Are you sure ? ”

“ Yes,” she replied ; “ but oh, I could like to see you in our little house, engraving your seals and plates again ! ”

“ That you shall see soon—the little house, at all events.”

“ Not to-morrow, Arthur, nor this week, for I'm going to cut the teazels ; but very soon we'll go, won't we ? ” she pleaded.

“ So soon, Cis, that the time will seem like nothing. And now I must be off—they'll be waiting. Say good-bye to your husband”

It seemed as if hot weather or hot pork, or both, had wrought deleteriously again on Eastwood Ellah. Whether these iggs of his were (as Monjoy

had upbraided him) assumed or not made very little difference in the result ; for you may reckon a man crazed who is crazy enough to desire to appear so. What Cicely had not told Arthur was of another of these attacks, in which, soothing his head with her hands, she had found herself suddenly laid hold of again ; and she now went in fear of him, and barred the door of her chamber at night. Once, though she had not heard him ascend, she had seen, from the inside, the sneck of the door lift noiselessly of itself ; and for hours, lying awake and clothed and trembling, she had listened to the furious racket of his loom in the adjoining chamber.

About that time there befell a sequel to the parson's wedding of which Pim o' Cuddy, none other, was the hero. The renewal of lease (so to speak) that his second wedding had given to his connubial bliss lapsed, and again his wife left him. But this leaving was different.

That is to say, the leaving itself was much the same, for Pim carried her basket as far as her mother's doorstep and there bade her a dejected farewell ; but this occasion was remarkable for what followed after Pim had returned home, locked his door, and betaken him to his reft couch.

He had not closed his eyes before he heard a soft whistle outside. It was the whistle of a neighbour, who, through the keyhole, informed him of something that had taken place down the street.

"What!" cried Pim hoarsely, and the neighbour repeated his tidings. It seemed that there had been words between Mrs. Pim and her mother, and for temper, the choice of the pair of them was between vinegar and vinegar.

"Tell me again 'what shoo said,'" whispered Pim, incredulously through the keyhole.

"Shoo said, shoo could pack off back. Shoo were fooil eniff to wed him th' first time, shoo said, but th' second, shoo'd ha' to stand tul it. 'Trot,' shoo said, and slammed th' window down. Shoo's sitting on her basket now."

Pim returned to bed.

Never had sheets seemed so delicious nor pillows so downy-soft. Pim hugged and loved himself in his glee. Twice he heard soft steps approach beneath his window—his wife was struggling with the humiliation of return; and the bed shook with his silent merriment. "Shoo were fooil eniff th' first time, shoo can stand tul it now!" Pim o' Cuddy had to gag himself with a pillow. It is not often we have the chance to live a score of years over again with everything come to pass exactly as we would have had it.

There came a soft tapping at the door, not too loud, for fear of neighbours. Pim whinnied under the bedclothes with delight. The knocking grew louder, and a familiar voice called in suppressed tones. Pim stifled. Then, at an unguardedly loud knock, a neighbouring window opened.

Further concealment was useless. Mrs. Pim o' Cuddy began to knock indeed, using a stone for the purpose. Neighbours began to join in the clamour. Cole the clogger would have given stock and goodwill to have been there.

Further feigning of sleep on Pim's part would have been preposterous. He cogitated desperately; the jest could not be relinquished yet; and then there came to him the choicest idea of all. He lighted a candle, descended to the door, and again called through the keyhole.

"Who is it?" he cried.

"I'll learn ye who it is, ye offald-looking church ratten!" came Mrs. Pim's reply; and then Pim lifted up his voice on high.

"What do I hear? A woman's voice?" he cried. "A woman's voice, and at my own door! Be off, ye baggage; be off wi' your nasty merchandise, d'ye hear? Be off, ye wicked light woman! Be off, and leave saints and godly men i' peace! Be off! . . ."

—And, in whatever kind Pim o' Cuddy subsequently paid for his prank, it remained doubtful whether at the bottom of his erring and naughty heart he ever really rued it.

Word came that John Raikes was short of teazel-heads, and Cicely prepared to cut them. She armed her legs with a pair of leggings of raw hide, and covered her fair hair and neck against the sun with a kerchief. She hung a basket about her neck with

a strap and put into it two old buckskin gloves and a pair of sheep-shears. She timed herself so as to be up the Scout about the time Arthur was due to return along the Causeway, and set off.

Save for herself, the whole village seemed to slumber. The blue-flowering tracts, of a blue so uncertain that of itself you could hardly have told whether it was near or distant, lay high up the sheep-tracks, and as she mounted grasshoppers filled the air with their dry rapid noise. The grass and yellow bents of the lower slopes were slippery as glass ; and she rose slowly until she could look down on both slopes of the roof of the little church and see into the square beyond it. Three miles away in the slumbrous heat lay Horwick, its roof-windows making piercing little points of light, and the vista beyond that was a grey shimmer, somewhere in which lay Ford Town and parts she knew nothing of. She tucked her skirt into the tops of her leggings, drew on the gloves, and began to move slowly along the Scout, snipping the slaty-blue teazel-heads as she went.

And as she worked, she thought of her husband, and tried to realise how she had come to marry him. It was all a jumble to her yet. In that strange gust of marrying she had answered she hardly knew how, except that, perhaps, of " Yes " and " No," the " Yes " had come first. Not that she did not love him, as the phrase was, if that was all ; but was there no more in it than that ? She thought

again of his perilous trade. She did not reckon it as goodness or wickedness, as she knew the parson would have done, but on its two chances—impunity or a shameful end. She had never heard of the man who, sent forth against his own tyrannous brother, knew that according to how he fared his meed was to be that of a deliverer or of a fratricide ; yet she dimly understood that Arthur stood in a strait scarce less narrow.—Yes, she must love him, or that little shiver, as if of a chill, would not have taken her. . . . She set her gloved fist to her waist to straighten herself, aching and drowsy with stooping over the teazels. As she did so, her wrist was taken from behind.

She had not heard his approach. “Arthur !” she said, and turned her head.

It was her cousin.

For a moment her smile vanished ; then she smiled again, but with a quickening heart. He did not release her wrist. It was of little use to speak to him, and they stood regarding one another at arm's length. She felt her courage falter ; he was trying to daunt her with his madness. The hair of his face glinted like bits of copper wire in the strong sun.

“Let me go, Eastwood,” she cried loudly.

Still his bulging eyes strove to quell her. “I've seen him kiss you !” he muttered hoarsely.

“Let me go, Eastwood !” she cried again.

“Ay, oft ; and I've known when I haven't seen

it. I can see through walls, I can”
His muttering became unintelligible.

What was left of her courage seemed to rise in a flood, and she knew that when it ebbed again she would be helpless. She tried again to free her wrist, and then she quivered throughout her frame.

“This is three times,” she cried, regardless of whether he heard or not; “and now stand off! You say you can’t look on your own blood. Stand off, then, for I’ll cut a vein with the shears if you don’t!”

He drew his hand quickly away at her menacing gesture, and she sprang back, the teazels plucking at her skirt. She breathed tumultuously, but her lips were closed, and as she retreated through the spiny teazels he began to advance again. Two or three ash-trees were behind her, but she did not dare to run for their shelter. Suddenly with all her force she began to call, “Arthur! Arthur!” Ellah plunged forward through the blue mist of bloom.

She stepped aside, and he fell. He rose scratched, and regarded his hands wildly, and she fled through the dragging teazels towards the ash-trees. She called again and again, “Arthur! Arthur!” There came an answer from the top of the Scout, but she continued to call his name. There was a sound of plunging and sliding, and Monjoy pushed through the mountain-ashes.

He took her in his arms and was gathering her to

him when suddenly he stopped. He pushed her aside and strode quickly forward. Ellah was looking, stupid and fascinated, at his bleeding hands, holding them away from him, and Monjoy took him by one leg and shoulder. He threw him as he would have thrown a sack, and the deaf man pitched shoulder first into the teazels and his legs came up and over in a curve. It was near the edge of the patch, and at the next turn his body took the slippery grass. He disappeared over the rounded edge. It seemed minutes before he reappeared, and then he was so far below that he seemed no more than a stone bounding down the hillside. Again he disappeared, and Monjoy sought Cicely. He found her huddled under an ash.

"Rest awhile, love," he muttered, "and then come with me. I'll get a bite and sup—I'll not sit down—and then I'll take you to Horwick. Let me do up your hair. . . . You haven't kissed your husband yet. . . . Yes, yes, hush! I'll get you to Horwick now. You should have told me. . . ."

He talked gently, without intermission, not questioning her; then he took her basket and put his arm about her. They kept the upper edge of the teazels, and he supported her down a sheep-track. Her father's house was empty. He took a gulp of water and ate a crust of bread while she tremblingly made herself ready; and then, his arm again about her, they descended the street.

CHAPTER VIII.

CRUDELITAS.

EVEN the occasional airs that strayed on the hills did not touch Horwick Town, which lay sweltering. Orders had gone forth from the constables that water was to be used with economy, and garbage cooked in the unswilled kennels. Dogs were kept on the chain for fear of rabies; roof-chambers became stoves, bull's-eye windows burning-glasses; dust rose heavily when it was stirred, and fell again in the same place; duckponds were basins of cracked earth; the very blue of the sky had paled before the devouring sun.

The blinds of John Emmason's dining-room were drawn, and the magistrate had knotted the four corners of a handkerchief over his head; it gave a tipsy appearance to his solemn horse-face. Again Moon and Eastwood had called on him, and Eastwood had removed his neckband, while from the merchant's nose the skin had peeled like a flowering grass. The magistrate's hand held an official document, and his manner was unusually humble.

"And you don't know what it consists of?" Moon said, breaking a long and brooding silence.

"No," the magistrate replied; "he only says, 'New evidence, calling for a fresh trial.' Here's his letter: 'William Chamberlayne, Solicitor to His Majesty's Mint, and also the Solicitor for the Crown'—hum, hum—'make oath and declare that a fresh discovery is likely soon to be made which will furnish the Crown with sure and certain evidence'—hum, hum, and so forth. No, I don't know what it is."

"What d'ye think it is?" Moon demanded.

"Ah, Matthew, it is not always expedient to tell all you think——"

"The devil take your slippery answers! D'ye think they're as good as hanged?"

The magistrate was silent.

"And when will this new trial be?"

"Any day," said Emmason, battling with his wounded dignity; and Moon turned to Eastwood.

"Who can we send?" he asked abruptly.

"Best send John Raikes. Fit him up wi' pigeons and let him get off to-day. I'll see the clogger."

"And for the other tomfoolery, pretending to search premises: Cope has a warrant?"

"Hm! Ay, he has a warrant," Eastwood said, with a shrug.

"So ye're wakening up, are ye?" Moon grunted;

and the tipsy tassels of the magistrate's handkerchief shook as he nodded, as if he himself had been addressed.

"As for seeing Parker again," he said, in a subdued voice, "I might as well sit where I am. I am bound to say it looks as if I was discredited, and I have thought of handing in my commission. Parker knows more than I. Even this"—he tapped the document—"even this I only received in common with every other magistrate in the Riding."

"God be thanked for a plain word from ye at last!" Moon said bitterly. "Can ye talk any more in that fashion?"

"There's little else to say," the humiliated magistrate replied. "If it would serve any end now to add my testimony against Northrop and Haigh—for they're both dead as clay, I fear——"

Moon bent his narrow brows on him.

"That'll do," he said; "now hold your tongue. . . . James, if you can come with me we'll fit John up for money. We're not beat because Emmason's frightened. There's chances. Juries aren't so ready to convict now for these half-crown matters when it's a man's neck; and Raikes knows his way about. Come. We've only two words to say to the lads, and the safest place for Cope will be his own bed. Come.—Don't you go adding testimony, Emmason. Good day."

They passed out into the glaring street, and that

same afternoon John Raikes, with half a dozen pigeons in a cage, set off on horseback for York.

Cope was no longer a jest. Even that merry soul, Cole the clogger, had ceased to button his coat over his arms and to slip the clogs on his hands, and only the magpie continued from habit to whistle "Hey, Johnny Cope," when the supervisor's toddling steps sounded down the croft. The reiterated "Good morning—morning, morning, morning," was returned shortly and without merriment; and Cole declared that he could have flung a clog-sole at the man only for his jarring laugh. Somebody had called the supervisor "the nail i' the stocks"—an expression from the fulling-mill, where, should a nail get into the trough where the heavy stampers pounded the wet cloth, the whole work was rent—and the nickname stuck.

And, as if he had now less to conceal, Cope, too, bore himself differently. At any rate, if he still used the "Mr." in addressing even a weaver, and his "hn, hn" was no less insinuating than before, he was differently interpreted, and an indefinable truculence was read into his actions. He even went a little further; for a young lad, grown bold, sang out one day in the market-place (as he had done a hundred times before), "Hey, Johnny Cope!" But this time Cope stepped to him, laughed a vicious little laugh, and took him a smart cut over the calves with his cane, passing

on with his head over his shoulder, while the dumb-founded lad whimpered and rubbed his wealed calves. A man standing by remarked, as if on a point of general discipline: "Serve him right;" but the significance of the incident did not pass unnoticed.

Cicely was with Sally again, and Monjoy still passed his nights elsewhere than in Horwick. It was to Monjoy, during one of these intervals in his labour, that Cope revealed a little more of what was in his mind. They had sat next to one another at the "Pipes" (where Cope still called frequently, and always for his single glass of weak brandy and water); and suddenly Cope, leaning towards Monjoy, said, "A word with you, Mr. Monjoy. . . . I am granted a search-warrant, on suspicion of I know not exactly what, over your new house up the Fullergate—hn, hn! You know as much of it as I, belike, for I may say it was forced on me; but my duty, hn!—I should have been happy to wink at it, but when magistrates become aware—hn! So at your convenience, eh?"

He scarcely took the trouble to put contempt into his tone, contempt for their childish machinating, and Monjoy gave an embarrassed laugh. "Nay, what the devil's this?" he exclaimed; and Cope peered at him, again patted the air mockingly, and gave the engraver the "La, Mr. Monjoy!" which he seemed to reserve especially for him.

“Ay, Emmason can hand in his commission as soon as he likes,” was Matthew Moon’s comment when this was reported to him; and even Monjoy seemed unusually contemplative. But John Raikes was to be trusted, and money could be raised at a word.

A rumour, too, of whatever nature, must have penetrated to Back o’ th’ Mooin, for there arrived from that quarter something that could only be regarded as a message for Jeremy Cope.

Among other pretensions of this puerile, dangerous folk was one that their territory was theirs to the uttermost title, and that even right of passage along the Causeway was by their permission. A Back o’ th’ Mooiner would watch a stranger pass as you might good-humouredly sanction a trespass. Now to maintain such a right against the inroads of custom you have to refuse the privilege from time to time, and that was exactly what Back o’ th’ Mooin did one day to two men who had come up out of Lancashire.

A score of the roughest of them—they were carrying heavy timbers from over Booth way—came upon these two men and bade them turn. Monjoy was in Horwick. The men pleaded urgency of affairs; they refused to hear them; they must go back till midnight. One of them (he must have been an irascible fellow) showed a disposition for fight, and a consultation was held on the spot. The name of Cope was mentioned, and at the whispered

speech of one of them—it was Mish Murgatroyd—a guffaw broke forth.

“Eh, that wad be a rare hint!” they cried, and they turned to the men, saying, “Ay, ye can go forward, but bide a bit.” A man set off at a run back to Booth, and when he returned it was with a bucket of pitch. They stripped the travellers to their boots and shirts, and when they had pitched them they cried, “Off wi’ ye; your clothes ’ll be put at th’ top o’ Wadsworth Scout at mid-night to-night. Gi’e ’em our love i’ Horwick.”

Some Wadsworth men found them that night, lying in the heather in the moonlight, waiting for their clothes.

And the odd thing was that when the tale got about Horwick none seemed to enjoy the jocularities of it so much as Cope himself. He heard it in the “Cross Pipes,” and he chuckled and smothered with laughter till his black-rimmed glasses were dim with his tears. “Rare fellows, rare fellows!” he wheezed; and the company, who had looked to see him take it differently, watched him warily.

“Rare fellows!” he said, rubbing his glasses. “I remember, Mr. Monjoy, something you once said about law and custom; may I take this as part of your—shall I say sovereignty?”

“No, you may not,” said Monjoy curtly.

“Hn, hn!—Now I don’t know whether you do me the honour to remember, gentlemen, my story of Hawley’s spy? I believe I omitted to say (quite

a coincidence) that they brought him in tarred, too——”

The hand of a man across the parlour made a movement to a heavy earthenware jug ; the hand was Matthew Moon's. Cope blinked askew at him, and he set the jug down again. The supervisor set his spectacles with great exactness on the bridge of his nose again, made the foolish familiar movement with his hand (but this time towards the merchant), and said : “ A violent temper ? . . La, Mr. Moon ! ”

Again, this happened a couple of days afterwards. The supervisor came out of his house that morning and was passing, with his customary greeting, down the croft. As he did so, Cole's magpie fell to whistling to his short step the song of “ Hey, Johnny Cope.” Cope stopped short, put his hand to his ear, and then deliberately walked back. He descended the narrow well of the clogger's doorway, adjusted his spectacles, and craned his head forward towards the bird in the cage.

“ Your bird, Mr. Cole ? ”

“ Ay—ay—he's mine,” the clogger replied timorously ; the exciseman had never before entered his shop.

“ Extraordinarily imitative creatures,” Cope observed, putting his hand to the door of the cage.

“ See he doesn't bite ye,” the clogger said tremulously.

"Eh?" said the exciseman sharply; and then, glancing malevolently over his shoulder at the clogger, and showing his corner teeth like a dog, he seized the bird with a quick movement. "Some folk, however, cannot abide them," he said. He drew the bird out, calmly wrung its neck, and flung the still palpitating body on the bench. Then he stepped to the door, mounted the steps, and turned.

"Good morning, Mr. Cole," he said, and passed again down the croft.

A pigeon, homing to Pim o' Cuddy at Wadsworth, carried a message that John Raikes had arrived in York, but brought no further news. Cope was now shunned by many, and the clogger contrived to dodge out of his sight whenever he passed. After the incident of the magpie, it began to go about that he was not a man, but a devil and a ghoul; nevertheless, he avoided none, and he was to be seen wherever men met for ale and talk and tobacco. As if a contagion emanated from him, he was allowed a corner to himself at the "Cross Pipes"; and the next thing was that he ceased to visit the "Pipes." That came about in this way.

Little was now said openly about the two men incarcerated in York Castle; but as if an imp pushed him to it, Cope himself seemed unable to keep his tongue off it. It chanced that somebody's wain-pole had cracked (or it might have

been a loom-timber), and a smith had made an iron collar to shrink over the split portion. The smith, sitting in the inn and toying with the ring as he talked, had set it over his wrist like a bracelet; and all at once Matthew Moon took his wrist, removed the fetter, handed it back to him, and bade him keep it in his pocket. Then, looking up, he caught Cope's eye. The exciseman smiled.

"I think you and I were thinking the same thing, Mr. Moon," he said.

The merchant blazed up suddenly and passionately.

"God send me better thoughts than yours!" he cried.

"Why," the dwarf remarked, "I was thinking of the pleasure of scratching your leg when you get them off again——"

But Moon waited for no more. He sprang to his feet, his hand raised to strike, and his face black with anger.

"Ye'll not be warned, ye fool?" he cried in a breaking voice.

There was no question of Cope's physical courage. The merchant could have crushed him, and every man seemed disturbed to find himself so far out of his reckoning. Instead of showing fear, Cope covered, bathed, enveloped the merchant in one baleful look, and said in an even voice, "Sit down." The door opened, and Sally Northrop stood in the entry.

"What's to do?" she cried; and Matthew's

eyes came slowly round to her. His hand fell, and he moved slowly backward to his seat.

"Nothing, Sally—get you gone—nobody wants anything—shut the door."

She stood puzzled for a moment, then left, closing the door behind her. Moon leaned forward, both hands on the arms of his chair, and knit his brows at Cope.

"That's the last," he said. "Come the next, and I'll serve you as they serve magpies."

Cope wagged his heavy head slowly. "I'm disappointed in you, Mr. Moon," he remarked.

"I've now finished speech wi' you," said the merchant with a dark look.

And for reply to that, Cope spat into the empty hearth.

Cicely became aware of awkward silences in Sally's presence and of mournful looks that passed behind her back, and these things filled her with a nameless trouble and apprehension. When Arthur returned to Horwick for his two days (for his spells over the moor were now doubled), her manner became wheedling and cajoling; and one night, putting her arms about him, she sought again to draw from him that which during the day he had refused to tell her.

"Where's John Raikes gone?" she whispered in his ear.

"Isn't he at home?"

"You know he isn't. Where's he gone, dear?"

"Hush, lassie ; go to sleep."

"Where's he gone, dear ?"

"Gathering turtle-feathers ; you'll wake Sally."

But her arms were about his neck. "Do you think I can't keep counsel ?" she pleaded. "Tell me, Arthur, or I shall guess worse than there is ; tell me, dear . . ."

He could not but yield ; he told her the little he knew. She lay very still by his side, and after a long time she said in a low voice :

"I saw Ellah to-day."

"He's about, is he ?"

"With a stick."

"Where was he—here ?"

"No ; he goes to the 'Fullers' now."

"He's a lucky man, if he but knew it. Now, darling, go to sleep, and don't lie awake fretting for Sally. Promise me——"

"I'll try," she said.

But she lay awake long after he slept soundly, and the perturbation of her thoughts showed in her manner during the days that followed. She sang over and over again the songs she knew, singing upstairs, downstairs and about, dreading to be silent for a minute ; and at night she went to bed tired out, and sometimes had to lie down for an hour during the afternoon, exhausted with this forcing of her spirits.—"Whisht, ye puss !" Sally would say, kissing her or making believe to chastise her hands and wrists. "Whisht, or I'll send for Dooina now !"

and Cicely, thankful that her restlessness was thus set down, would embrace her passionately and pray that Sally might not be aware of the tears that fell sometimes on her hair. Sally would make confidences, too, which harrowed Cicely; even this acted happiness of her friend would sometimes bring a quick sadness into Sally's eyes; and then Cicely would hurriedly set about some occupation, making work for herself, and singing again. Thus passed a fortnight of the blazing midsummer.

Ellah was about again, but pitifully changed. Folk turned to watch him as he passed—it was not known how he had come by his accident, save that he had fallen down the Scout—and they said that even yet he would be better at home than limping about Horwick, let alone the expense, for he stayed now at the "Fullers' Arms." His left hand dangled helplessly before his breast, an idiot gesture, and his right shook and wavered as he supported himself with a stick. His former dread of open spaces was now become so exaggerated that he would not venture into the market-place nor scarce cross even a narrow street; and he hobbled along close to walls, going thrice the distance rather than venture beyond the gutter. He said he felt easier so. On one foot he wore a felt slipper; and folk said that he was lucky to have got off with his wits only a little worse muddled than before.

Since Matthew Moon's menace, Cope also had

made the "Fullers'" his calling-place. The house had a humbler following than Jim Northrop's inn, and the landlord made ends meet by weaving in a room upstairs. If here again Cope was not made over-welcome, he now seemed to enjoy that rather than otherwise. They had so entirely ceased to despise him that there was silence at a snap of his finger; he led the conversation when he would; and he did this sometimes in a manner that left them little appetite for their ale. They were not squeamish in the "Fullers'," but Cope dealt in inhuman things, not simply wounds, maimings, and the like, but other and unspeakable things, and with a glee such as a devil might have displayed. The landlord knew that Cope's custom cost him a good deal more than it was worth, but he dared not for his life have spoken.

One night Cope fairly emptied the room. Ellah, who had not heard his words, alone remained. The landlord had come in, and was ruefully gathering up the half-emptied, abandoned mugs, and he was passing out with his hands full of these when Cope called him sharply.

"Yes, sir?" he said, almost whimpering—for he, too, had heard.

"So you're another of 'em, eh? Hn! hn! hn! hn! . . . Now I wonder if you can tell me something I'll ask you?"

"No, sir," the landlord almost sobbed, as if he were already asked it.

"Quiet, you fool! It is this: Their chests go purple, exactly as I described (don't sob, landlord), and a man with a fat and puffy neck (which is what I was describing when our friend the clogger was struck all of a heap). . . . well, well, it is so; and when it isn't asphyxia it's apoplexy, and may be both. With the windpipe partly ossified—(by the way, I haven't seen our other friend for some time)—with the windpipe partly ossified, which I could determine by an examination with my fingers, thus—" He shot out his hand as if to clutch the landlord's throat.

"For the love o' God, don't, sir!" the landlord screamed, falling back; and Cope sniggered.

"Hn! hn! hn! hn! hn! . . . Very well; and now to my question." His voice changed almost to a snarl. "Why," he demanded, "when the thing itself is at their doors, will the rascals blench at the name of it? I think their necks are stouter than their stomachs! My God, what fools!—Curse 'em in London; they told me there was work for a man here, and what do I find? Monjoy with his porridge-brains at the head of it, and the others. . . . I had hopes of your merchant at first; but, bah! a passionate child! Not a man worth my while among 'em; I might have begun as you see me now. . . . Off with you, you slaving rascal; shog off, knock-knees! Off! —"

Perhaps his obscene triumph of earlier in the

evening had emboldened him, or more likely he spoke now also of design. He finished his glass, sent it rolling across the table, rubbed his hands together under Ellah's nose, and cried, "Come, good Ellah, come, my new bosom comrade! Keep to the wall—that's it—now a rub against the door-jamb and creep into your own shadow—excellent! Curse it, your gait's after my own heart, dodging round corners and nosing along the kennels—hn! hn! hn! Take my arm. . . ."

They passed out, Ellah leaning on the supervisor.

Two days later there came a word that drove all else from men's minds: All was ready at last at the Slack. There were vague rumours of ceremonies and rites to be observed, as if, instead of two furnaces set up in defiance of the laws of the land, two altars were to be consecrated. The obtaining of fuel (it was said) still remained a difficulty, but one thing at a time; that would be solved by and by, and there was to be no further delaying of the inauguration. Monjoy had been in Horwick for a couple of days; at nine o'clock of a July evening he climbed the Scout and strode along the Causeway. It was a serene and burning sunset, and the purple of the heather was turned to a rich low gold. Sheep called from hill to hill, and from time to time grouse rose and fled. Slowly the sun went down, turning the moor to ink; the moon would not rise till midnight; and only the

grey Causeway seemed of itself to retain some dim glimmer of day. That, too, died down ; the night became still and sultry ; and Big Monjoy continued to stride towards the Slack long after the immense moor had become a thronging together of shadows and darkness.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SLACK.

DOWN in the Slack lanterns moved, and the confused noise of voices could be heard a mile away. Dark forms, running hither and thither, seemed to interweave with the shadows, while others lay stretched up the hillside or sat squatting on barrows and timbers. For a hundred yards and more the slope of the hill showed the toil of many weeks. Hillocks of earth, sand, clay, stones, a confusion of timbers, barrows, baulks, spades and mattocks, ropes, lime-heaps and what not, littered the border of the Slack. Had you tried to thread your way among these you would have run the risk of walking suddenly into the deep cutting in the hillside that sheltered the furnaces themselves. The larger furnace for smelting was built into the hill; the smaller refining furnace stood cheek by jowl with it, and was barely five feet high. A tripod of heavy beams, that had served its end with the completion of the construction, had not yet been taken

down, and a half-made tackle like a heavy capstan, apparently for crushing, seemed to have been abandoned. The smaller of the furnaces was fitted with a pair of bellows in a gibbet-like frame ; and fifty yards away, where the Slack turned on itself towards Brotherton Bog, was the older plant—the heavy frames in which the coining-dies were set, to be struck with the sledges.

They had blackened their faces with soot or charcoal, as children might who wished to make themselves out desperately wicked, and they leaped and moved with uncouth gestures. As if their native jargon of a dialect had not been enough, they had added to it a harsh and villainous lingo of unmeaning syllables. The furnace fires were laid ; half a dozen casks of ale lay near them ; and on mats of sacking on the hillside a couple of slaughtered and dressed sheep were ready for the roasting. Mish Murgatroyd had had his hair cut, and where the perspiration had partly washed his brow of its grime his two great calf-licks gleamed oilily in the shifting lantern-light. His brute of a brindled dog was fastened to one of the scaffold-timbers. A man called Leventoes had blacked, not his face only, but his body from the waist up ; and Dick o' Dean had smirched himself, not with black, but with red sheep-ruddle. These two danced here and there, mopping and mowing and talking the lingo incessantly. The youth called Charley seemed to have made himself drunk before coming ; and Pim o' Cuddy,

the devil's clerk now, hopped here and there, boasting gleefully of his own wickedness, and mixing up lingo and responses in an imbecile manner. Two men played singlestick with hammer-hafts, making sharp cracks in the night.

From the northern end of the Slack there came a shout and cheer, and those lying on the hillside sat up or sprang to their feet. The lanterns moved towards one point and danced about it, like a cluster of fireflies, and a louder cheering broke out. Monjoy had appeared. Dick o' Dean danced an antic dance towards him, banging on a spade with a gavelock, and crying, "A'm red, too, Arthur, boroo-boy, boroo, boroo!" Monjoy stood in the midst of the grimy horde.

He glanced at their disfigured faces.

"Nay, what the devil have you got yourselves up this way for?" he exclaimed, and they began to dance again, like vain children when overmuch notice is taken of them. "Let's begin, let's begin!" they cried, and already some had set their lanterns down before the furnace-doors. Monjoy swore softly at their folly, and then said, "Very well. Let's have it over." They pressed about him with lanterns, seeking the favour of whose should be accepted. All swarmed round the furnaces.

At a signal from the red imp, Dick o' Dean, they fell back in a wide semicircle. Monjoy flung off his cap and coat and rolled up the sleeves of his

shirt ; and as he knelt by the fireplace and opened a lantern a low murmur of gibberish rose like an incantation. "They're in a choice humour to-night," he muttered to himself, and he set the lamp-flame to the furnace.

A quick straw-flame leaped upwards, and the singsong of huggermugger words rose like some strange response. It fell again, and rose again spontaneously, as the clacking had risen and fallen at the pieceboards. It rose to a high-chanted cacophony, "Boroo, boroo !" and the foolish artificial effects of mumbling and blackened faces made ridiculous the place and hour. Sticks caught and crackled in the fire, and there broke out suddenly short yelps, accompanied by a rhythmic movement of bodies.

The fuel was dry as tinder, and the furnaces began to roar side by side. The semicircle broke up, and the moans and concerted calls became a chaos of noise. A man drove in the bung of a cask of ale, and from the shallow tin bowl that he filled three or four strove to drink at once, spilling the liquor over their bodies. They were fixing hooks into the carcasses, and already from the orifice of the larger furnace flickerings of flame had begun to stream upwards. Monjoy tugged at his whiskers, regarding this. "We can't avoid a glow," he muttered, "but we don't want a conflagration. I'll build a high hood of earth. . . ." He climbed to the brink of the cutting and stood in

thought. Already the furnaces stood in a clear red light, and it was becoming hot.

Many had now stripped off their coats and shirts, and gleaming ribs and shoulders, black faces and hairy chests, flitted and mingled in the red glare fantastically. The first cask of ale was finished, and as they became drunk each man vented his joy in the howl that liked him best. The counterchange of ruddy light on leaping bodies was restless; shadows streamed away into the darkness; and men wreathed their arms about one another, and danced and wrestled as the fires burned furiously. Some were for setting the carcasses on to roast at once; but Mish Murgatroyd barred the furnace door with a crowbar, seized a man who approached it in his sinewy arms, and they rolled over together in black moulder's sand, while Mish gnashed his teeth, for all it was but horseplay. Monjoy, looking down on them from the edge of the cutting, murmured, "Satan himself won't be able to hold them in an hour."

Somebody touched him on the shoulder. He turned, and saw James Eastwood. Surprised, he fell a pace back.

"Why, I didn't think this mumming was much to your taste," he said, and Eastwood drew him by the shirt sleeve.

"Come where we can talk," he said; "I've come to see you."

They passed above the furnaces, and descended

the hill where the Slack turns towards Brotherton Bog. They put the shoulder of the hill between themselves and the hubbub, and the moon, at its last quarter, appeared low over the moor, and showed the little creeping miasmic vapours that curled over the surface of the dark morass. Again Eastwood took Monjoy's sleeve.

"Tell me where Ellah is," he said abruptly.

"Eh?" said Monjoy. "You didn't expect to find him here, did you?"

"Don't waste words. He left the 'Fullers' two days ago, and he isn't in Wadsworth."

Monjoy's arms were folded and his fingers were moving lightly on his big biceps. They were suddenly arrested in their movement, and his brow tightened suddenly into a concentrated knot.

"Are you sure, James?" he said slowly; and from beyond the hummock there came a fresh burst of laughter.

Eastwood made no reply.

"Did I hear you right? You say he's gone?"

"Yes. . . . I see you know naught about it. Then tell me how he came crippled?"

One of Monjoy's hands was making little plucking movements at his lip, and suddenly he turned and walked a few yards towards the Bog. Soon, "Eh?" he said mechanically over his shoulder, "At my hands, James, at my hands;" and he resumed his walk. Eastwood looked at the ground at his feet, and by and by Monjoy approached him again.

"You're quite—quite sure that's——?" he faltered, and without waiting for an answer he began to walk again.

He had put away quickly the solution that had leaped instantaneously into his mind. He did not dare to ask for that of the flock-master. Another noisy peal of laughter came from behind the hill; and suddenly Monjoy felt such a shiver pass over him as they say is caused by the fall of a footstep over the place that is to be your grave.

By and by he found himself at Eastwood's side again.

"Tell me quick what you think?" he commanded.

The flockmaster did not look at him. "A chaise went up the Fullergate the night afore last, past midnight."

"What of that?"

"Only two things you can tak' your pick of——"

"Christ!——"

"One, a neighbourly call on John Raikes i' York, and t'other a signed deposition afore Parker i' Ford. Cope's got hold of him, that's all. . . . What made ye lay hands on him?"

Monjoy groaned. "Never mind that, never mind that—where's Cope?"

"I' th' bog yonder watching us, for all I know. I hadn't time to ask Matthew any more; he packed me off to ye all in a minute and bade me run. And th' new trial's in a week, Emmason says."

"Yes, yes," Monjoy repeated stupidly.

"I wonder, James," he said brokenly, by and by—"nay, look up at me, James—is it money, or hatred of myself he's sold us for, sold Northrop and Haigh and all of us?"

"Nay, don't tak' on that road, Arthur; all isn't over yet. Juries has stopped . . . anyway, a daft man can't gi'e evidence; no, not a daft man——"

"No, not a daft man," Monjoy repeated dully. Mechanically he was rolling down his sleeves and fastening the buttons at the wrists.

"Come, stiffen yourself up; nothing's happened yet. Hark! they're calling ye; come, I'll go back wi' ye——"

They returned slowly towards the furnaces.

The Slack was now a pandemonium. Naked bodies were lightly striped with rivulets of sweat and grime, and a powerful smell of cooking and burning filled the night. The furnaces flamed with the yellow flare of blazing fat, and spat and roared with a tremendous hollow sound. A man, driving in the bung of another cask, struck awry, and the liquor shot forth in a spout, covering the men and spirting like a catherine-wheel when a hand was clapped over the hole; and they stood with their mouths open and received the torrent of strong liquor full in their faces. Underneath the furnaces was an incandescence of pink and white wood-ash, and men took embers in their hands and tossed them on the naked backs of their fellows.

As Monjoy and Eastwood approached, there came a fresh uproar and a new diversion.

"Show him aforehand what it'll be like!" voices bawled, and Pim o' Cuddy was seen struggling in a dozen arms. He shrieked for mercy, but they cried, "Show him th' bad place where clerks goes to that's turned wrong!" and they bore him to the mouth of the furnace. He writhed and screamed. Presently they let him go, and then they turned to the youth Charley, who was in a drunken sleep. They set glowing brands into his clothing, and screamed with delight at his uneasy movements as, with the brands burning through his clothes, he still slept. The carcasses began to frizzle and char, and the furnace doors were flung open. Men made runs towards it with a long hook, and retreated again before the fierce heat, with scraps of smoking flesh at the end of the hook. Finally, they got the hook firmly fixed; the carcase lodged in the door and then came out suddenly, hissing, frying, and black with the sand on which it had fallen.

"Arthur mun cut it! Where's Arthur?" they cried.

He had thrown himself on the hillside. He was watching them gloomily, his head on his hand. Eastwood's sinister intelligence, brought in this his crowning hour, chimed only too well with a score of half-forgotten trifles and indications. Back o' th' Mooiin itself still remained impregnable, but the

two men in York could be reckoned as dead as the roasted carcasses. Dead, too, on the word of a man, whose evidence, had it been for instead of against them, would not for a moment have been admitted. He made one more effort to throw off the horrible fear that lay on his heart like lead ; he felt himself weak as water ; he knew that the testimony of a lunatic had been admitted. Again the mummers were approaching him ; he made a gesture that they were to proceed with their feast. Loud murmurings rose, and he lifted himself heavily up. "Give me a drink," he said, and a tin bowl was filled for him.

"This is a pretty mockery," he said to Eastwood. "It ought to be a prayer, oughtn't it ? They put themselves on their knees to pray. I must do it with a bowl of liquor to my lips. Jim and Will—Jim Northrop and Will Haigh ! . . . Bah ! Let's get it over." He drained the bowl and flung it far from him.

The hubbub broke out again. "Arthur !" they yelled. "King Arthur ! Three for him, lads——"

The drunken shout pealed over the hills, and Monjoy stood with his arm outstretched. It died away, and he began to speak in short, deliberate sentences, turning his body that every man might hear.

"All's ready now," his voice sounded. "What we set out to do four months ago we've done. I'll tell you again, for the last time, what that is.

Most of you have never journeyed a dozen miles from this spot in your lives ; I have, and it's right that I should tell you what I know. Back o' th' Mooin's only an odd corner of this land ; it's now setting itself up against all the rest. Before these furnaces are lighted for ore you've the odds to reckon. The trade's paid you up to now, but it's been a small trade, followed quietly in corners. You're now going to make a great traffic of it, and that in the daylight. I'll tell you what that means. . . ."

Only the steady roar of the furnaces interrupted him as he began this, his last warning. He told them briefly how one part of a realm might prosper at the expense of the rest ; how, pushed too far, that ceased to avail ; how, by the commonness of a commodity, came cheapness ; how gold alone, by its scarcity, settled the value of all other things ; how even that was alterable at the decree of personages in authority ; and again of the frightful risk.

"One man," he continued, his voice shaking a little, "one man, speaking ten words in hatred or anger or liquor, can overwhelm all. Silver can be fought with silver, and they'll offer rewards. Bribe, they will, and suborn and corrupt. Are we safe with that ? Can't we think of a man among us that, for a King's reward, will sell us ? . . ."

Rising murmurs began to interrupt him. They increased as he continued. Presently they

drowned his voice. He stopped and cried, "Let one speak for you." Mish Murgatroyd was thrust forward.

From his lips came a thick utterance.

"We've heard ye, Arthur," he said, swaying a little. "There's naught naughbut one thing we ha' to speak tul, eh, lads? For what ye say about makkin' silver cheap an' that, 'tis for ye to say how mich we shall mak' an' all that, 'an' that's why th' lads calls ye king. Nobody'll set up ageean ye i' sich matters, so that's sattled. But I'll tell ye when ye weant be king onny longer. Ye'll not be king when th' man ye speak of offers to sell us. What, lads? What, Dick? What, Belch an' Hell Harry? Who deals wi' that man?"

A short ferocious roar answered him.

"Ay. I think Arthur heard that. We saddle wi' him; so that's done wi' an' all. What else is there? Nooan so mich. All's ready, or near by. For th' coal, we know how to get coal wi'out Arthur, an' Arthur can tak' a rest of a bit. We'll see to things. We'll see to th' man that tak's a bribe an' all. Fill th' pannikin, Leventoes; Arthur'll ha' one more drink wi' us. . . ."

* * * * *

Monjoy and Eastwood strode along the Causeway to Wadsworth. The morning star had set; the day had broken a clear saffron; and the singing of the mounting larks could be heard far away. The bells of an approaching pack jangled, the pack-

men gave them good morning, and the jangling died away behind them. The sun came up in splendour, and a regal glory bathed the heather. As Big Monjoy removed his cap of foxskin his great russet head seemed to burn, and he turned to Eastwood.

“What do you think the next will be, James?” he asked quietly, and, Eastwood making no reply, they continued to stride forward past the black-topped guide-stones.

CHAPTER X.

THE HOME-COMING.

EVEN a parson (the cynical said) could not remain for ever in ignorance of that which was so bruited about that little else was spoken of, and the Wadsworth parson awoke to the knowledge at last. The way in which he showed his distress was by a public preaching.

More of those concerned would have heard him had he preached in a tavern instead of in a church (on which also the cynical had something to say); but among the sprinkling into whose hearts his words sank was Cicely Monjoy, come over for the Sunday to see her father. She heard the earnest and broken sentences in which he addressed himself directly to the women, and his supplication and promise of God's pardon; and he did not hesitate to speak even of the two men in York, now on the eve of another trial for their lives. At that many of the women sobbed, and Pim o' Cuddy's voice seemed to strangle as he read out the hymn. Just before the Benediction the parson prayed espec-

ally for Northrop and Haigh ; and Cicely, knowing well that after the service he would seek her out, made speed away, a painful heaviness at her heart.

The sermon came at the right time to make a stir in Horwick. The new trial was in everybody's mouth, and (though they did not speak much of this) the disappearance, not of Eastwood Ellah only, but since several days of Jeremy Cope himself, was at the back of everybody's thought. From John Raikes, far away in York, there came not so much as a word to allay their anxiety. It was rumoured that John Emmason had paid another call on Parker of Ford, and that Parker also was away from home and his clerk unable or unwilling to inform Emmason of his whereabouts. As the day appointed for the trial approached, the anxiety increased ; and some even waited on the Wadsworth parson, who, as a public man, might have news that others lacked.

Then one morning Eastwood Ellah was seen to issue from the " Fullers' Arms " as if he had never left the house.

Of the replies he gave to their eager questions they could make nothing. The questioners ran in haste for Matthew Moon or James Eastwood. These met with no better success. Ellah could not, or would not, hear. His eyes now rested constantly on the ground, and a lunatic he looked, with the helplessly dangling wrist at his breast. He hugged the wall, and whimpered when they

tried to drag him from it ; and he entered the inn again, chattering to himself, and locked himself in the landlord's loom-loft. The landlord could only tell them that Ellah had knocked him up at two o'clock in the morning, alone.

Matthew Moon would not now set foot in the "Cross Pipes" for fear of meeting Sally's glance, and on Monjoy's spirits no less a heaviness rested. One evening Monjoy besought his wife to accompany him for a walk, and they passed out of the Town End to a dean in the valley under Wadsworth Shelf. They sat down on the bank of a dried-up stream. Monjoy implored her to leave the inn and to come to their own house up the Fullergate.

At the tone in which she replied he started a little.

"You shall tell me why first ; you shall tell me all," she answered frigidly.

"There's nothing to tell, dear ; John Raikes has sent no word," he replied. He tried to take her hand, but she drew a little away from him.

"Well, I can find out elsewhere ; I thought I'd ask you first," she said, in the same cold tone.

"Come, let's get back."

"Wait a bit, dearie," he said dejectedly, and at that she turned quickly round on him.

"Oh, I wait too much ; it's all waiting with us women. I waited in Wadsworth, before leaving all of a sudden. I'm to wait again now. Your tidings are public enough for a parson to preach

about, but I'm not to be trusted, it seems. The only thing I've ever asked you for, too—a ring to wed me right—I must wait for that an' all. Ay, we have need to be patient."

"I don't want you to wait another day before you come to our own house that you asked for, Cicely."

"Our own house: but when I asked for that I asked you to turn to your engraving again, and buy me a ring I shouldn't shame to wear, and be honest wi' me as I am wi' you. We spoil you wi' waiting your pleasure, all of us, and I'm glad I came out to-night. I'm glad, because I can tell you this: I'll come, perhaps, by and by. I'll have a real husband or none. Look, there's your ring. If I'm to have a husband o' Sally's sort, very well; me and Sally'll wait together."

He had turned pale. "You can't mean, Cicely——?"

"Nay, that's all past. I've thought over this. You tell me nothing, but I can guess what you dread for Jim and Sally—I can tell it by your face now. And I'm to leave her! . . . Nay, I'd rather leave my husband than have him ta'en from me. I'll lie wi' Sally to-night; you'll be foolish to follow me. Keep your ring—it will melt up into something. I've waited; the little house can wait now."

She was on her feet. "Cicely!" he cried, but she was gone. He half rose as if to follow her, then

he sank back again. The going down of the sun found him still on the bank of the dried-up stream.

The very trade of the town was at a standstill on account of the new trial. It was fixed for the seventh, a Friday, and loungers in the market-place exchanged odd guilty looks and glanced at the grimy cactus-pattern of chimney-flues on the end of the "Cross Pipes"—for with the fixing of the date it had been impossible to keep the news any longer from Sally, and she had broken down and taken to her bed, where Cicely tended her. Another man was sent off to York to see what had become of John Raikes, and a number of Back o' th' Mooiners remained in Horwick to see what might befall. The door of the loom-loft at the "Fullers' Arms," within which Ellah had shut himself, had been forced, and Ellah had been discovered cowering in a corner and swallowing a guinea; and it was passed about that Ellah had guineas. They had locked him in the loft again and barred the window; but a bright flame had shone out into the Fullergate towards evening, and they had hastily entered again. He had collected a quantity of rubbish under the loom and had tried to set fire to it. They removed all that was loose and combustible. Friday morning broke; it might have been a Sabbath for all the work men offered to do; and they moved silently about the market-place, waiting, scarce entering their houses for their meals. The day wore to evening.

That evening a noble sunset flooded Wadsworth Scout with golden light. Groups of men stood about the small square, walking from the "Gooise" to the church, and returning again. The parson had locked himself in the church, and Pim o' Cuddy had retired to his chamber. They watched the declining sun. As it dipped, the ridges and wrinkles of the Scout started out suddenly into strong relief, dramatic as if a scene had been changed at a play-house; and suddenly a pigeon was seen to rise over James Eastwood's roof and to wheel and circle as he neared his home. From every throat there issued an eager cry.

"Whose is it?" "'Tis Pim's!" "Ho'd on—shoo'll coit in a minute!" "Where's Pim? Run for Pim!"

Some dashed off for the verger. The bird was wheeling in the golden light over the belfry of the church, the belfry with the new louver-boards. They recognised the bird—it was from Jolin Raikes; and Pim o' Cuddy was haled from his agonies of repentance. He stood peering up at the pigeon.

"Shoo's trying to get into th' owd coit—sitha!—shoo's flinging hersen ageean th' boards—th' other coit, th' other coit, ye——!"

"Is shoo from Jolin?" a voice demanded.

"Ay—ay—it's on her leg, look! Oh, coit, ye——!"

"Fotch a gun."

A man ran off to the "Gooise" for a gun, and

presently returned, ramming home a double charge. They clustered about the buttress of the church, and the man stood back to shoot. The parson's prayers were interrupted by the bang of a gun, and the heavy charge of lead rattled against the louver-boards of the belfry. A yell of rage went up; the double weight of shot had blown the bird to morsels, and they scrambled among the falling flesh and feathers for the message. The message, too, had disappeared.

"Up to th' roof, Tommy—see if there's aught there." A lad was hoisted up by the spout.

"Can ye find owt?"

"Nooa."

They searched far and wide; they found nothing. A man started off to Horwick at a run, another after him; and the parson, coming out of the church, strove helplessly to quell the rage of cursing. "Had John another o' yours?" somebody demanded of Pim o' Cuddy; and the verger, cringing under the parson's eye, blubbered, "No—Ay, ay—No, no. Oh, go back an' pray for us all, parson!"

They learned in Horwick within an hour that some fool had blown John Raikes's pigeon to bits with a gun, and they ground their teeth. To York, it was thirty-eight miles as the pigeon had flown—nearer fifty than forty by the roads; but "Who has th' best horse?" they cried, and pockets were emptied of silver there and then, and a tall fellow was despatched hell-for-leather. Again the loom-

loft where Ellah crouched in the corner was entered, this time by half a dozen Back o' th' Mooiners, with Mish Murgatroyd at their head. They found him apparently in physical agony, and were compelled to leave him. They ran to Cope's house at the top of the croft. His door was barred, but they thrust the pale youth Charley through a window, and he admitted them by the door at the back by the beck. They ransacked the house and found a bundle of letters; they took them into the clogger's shop. Charley could read, and he read them. They were from Parker of Ford, from somebody in London called Chamberlayne, from somebody else called Captain Ritchie, and from other folk of whom they had never heard. But they were all covering-letters, or letters of general compliment, beginning, "Herewith I send you," or "The enclosed, with Mr. Parker's compliments," or else, "Captain Ritchie presents his compliments to Mr. Cope." The correspondence was copious, but they were little the wiser for the perusal of it, and they trooped off to John Emmason's. Emmason's servant told them the magistrate was not at home.

The latest-sent messenger should have been back early in the morning; he did not appear. He had not appeared by midday, and by that time Horwick was crowded with Back o' th' Mooiners. The afternoon passed, and the evening. York might have been the Indies for all the communication there was. Night fell. The Back o' th' Mooiners would

have dragged out Eastwood Ellah, but Arthur Monjoy with difficulty prevented it, and there was an uproar in the "Fullers' Arms." The next day was a Sunday, and the better sort betook themselves to church in the most extraordinary fashion, seeking their Lord (as men do) only in the hour of their need of Him. Perhaps, too, they thought of another service that, for all they knew, was being held thirty-eight miles away as pigeons fly, and of two men in a pew by themselves, and by their sides that which, by the rising of the morrow's sun But no! Not that! Why, did not months sometimes elapse between sentence (to admit even so much as that) and the consummation of it? And had not juries ceased to convict for such offences? And why should the trial have been over all in one day? And was there not reprieve? Not very many from Back o' th' Mooin went to church, but for four days not a hand had been lifted to open up the coal-workings, nor to forward the labour at the furnaces. That night a fourth rider was despatched for York.

He alone of the four returned, and that was not until the Monday midnight. A furious clattering of hoofs in the night was heard down the Fullergate, and every man who heard it sprang from his bed. The sound ceased at the "Fullers' Arms." In two minutes a crowd thronged the street, and the man fell from the saddle into their arms. Lights were brought, and he was carried into the inn,

and there, lying extended on a bench, he gasped it out in broken sentences, the news, or some of it.

It was high flattery that he brought for Back o' th' Mooin. You are of consequence when, at York, thirty-eight miles away, and farther than that, you can make a stir. All York was speaking of their doings. Whether Cope was there in person the messenger was unable of his own knowledge to say. It mattered little, for men even greater than Cope had come to see to the hanging of Jim Northrop and Will Haigh, the event that the Monday morning's sun had shone upon. John Raikes had been seized in the very act of throwing up a pigeon—(Could they get him a drop o' brandy ?)—and the other two men had been identified, or, at least, taken up on suspicion, from the pattern of their clogs.—(No, no water in it.)—He himself had barely managed to creep out of York at night-fall, without horse (he had not dared to go back for the horse), and he had walked four miles to a quiet farm and had got a horse from a stable (No, he was no horse stealer ; he had left some money on the edge of the manger), and so he had ridden back. Eh, but Back o' th' Mooin did not know its own fame ! On its sole account, constables with pikes had lined the streets, and special guards of the soldiers of the garrison had been set, and a dreaded judge and counsel, who rarely appeared out of London, had come, and prolonged the sitting of

the court in order to finish . . . for all he knew, a special jury had been packed too Famous ? You had to go to York to learn how famous you were !

And the evidence—was it that of the man in the chamber upstairs, who had swallowed guineas and tried to set the house ablaze ?—The messenger did not know for certain ; all he knew was that the evidence had been taken on deposition. He knew no more than that ; that he had heard spoken of in a tavern where they had all talked about the trial. He had had much ado to get himself away without making too many inquiries.—Ay, maybe they had ta'en it by deposition so as not to put a mooncalf in the box ; he hadn't come to try, the judge hadn't—he'd come to hang. Ay, Back o' th' Mooin was as famous as that !—They had spoken in the tavern, too, of a new thing called an Exchequer bond, that a great lord had been made a baron for inventing ; and after that, they said, gold itself would hardly be worth tampering with.—What was going to be done next he didn't know, but they'd best look out i' Horwick, Wadsworth, everywhere, for all wasn't over yet.—(Could they get him some vinegar to sponge himself with, for he was one ache and bruise from neck to ankle.)—Oh, yes, they were selling Jim's last speech, too, printed, and a letter Jim had written to his wife an' all. He hadn't bought one.—Ay, it was a shame, that was, the letter not being meant to be

printed and sold ; to be sure, that was a shame. John Raikes had had time to buy 'em both new suits o' clothes ; they hadn't died dunghills, neither of 'em ; they'd kicked their shoes off.—If anybody'd rub him wi' the vinegar, and make him a bed middling soft He dozed as he talked.

They tolled the church bells of Horwick and Wadsworth the next day.

In the collection of records among which Matthew Moon's accounts—those of the crown-pieces and guineas and Portugals—have been preserved, you may read also of the home-coming of Jim Northrop and Will Haigh. It was two days later, on a Thursday, and no market was held that day. But every man for miles round assembled as never market-day had seen them, and they had put black crape on their arms and hats, and the women sobbed in one another's kitchens. Every blind in Horwick was drawn. The "Cross Pipes" was closed, but Sally knew nothing of what happened, for before the Piece Hall bell had begun to toll she had been given a heavy draught, and it was said that she breathed but thrice in a minute. The day was hot and brilliant ; the hills and moors were magnificent under the August sun ; and the larks sang as if there was no care or anguish or death in the world.

They were aware of the approach of the procession while it was yet miles away. Men preceded it at a trot, dusty, breathless, eager as if they brought joyful news. One footsore fellow—

he had walked from York—carried some of the pamphlets of which the man who had ridden in at midnight had spoken. They were seized by Matthew Moon, who plunged a shaking hand into his breeches-pockets for silver and told off lads to buy up all of that sort that appeared. Folk began to come in in a dense stream, gaping about them, curious to see the place that had become so suddenly famous; but their holiday humour soon passed. You can't be light-hearted in a town of mourning. They asked which was "his" inn, and gazed foolishly at the sooty flue-branchings of the "Pipes." "Right to his own door!" they said; and some asked where the other had lived, and went away to see the place, where they stood, lugubriously contented. The bell of the Piece Hall continued to toll; the Fullergate became packed; and Arthur Monjoy, who had sought unavailingly to see Cicely, could scarce get to his own house.

A low distant murmur sounded and increased. Northrop and Haigh were coming home at last. All at once the sun glinted on the steel head of a pike, and on another and another. Above the heads of the crowd a chief constable on horseback could be seen, and behind him the driver of a cart. The nodding heads of the horses were hung with black crape. Cope did not accompany his cruel procession. The two coiners were lapped in straw in the cart, tarred for the chains, and their gibbet-

timbers rode with them. Every hat, of native or sightseer, was off, and the vendors of pamphlets and liquor and sugar-candy and rope at sixpence an inch were silent. The convoy turned into the market-place, and then all stopped. The chief constable on the horse held a proclamation in his hand, and suddenly his voice sounded over the square. The proclamation set forth the crimes for which these had died, and admonished all men to take heed ; and when he had read it, he passed it to another constable, who ascended the Piece Hall steps and affixed it to the pillar that still bore the placard that only a few months before had filled Matthew Moon with apprehension. The constable gave orders for a fresh start to be made, towards a spot half way up Wadsworth Shelf, and the driver of the cart shook up his crape-draped horses.

They fell in behind the cart. All at once a stormy muttering rose and a low confused roar. About the cobbled space where they unloaded the pack-horses there was a sudden movement of men, not after the cart, but towards the " Fullers' Arms." Mish Murgatroyd's tall figure headed it. James Eastwood saw whither they were bound, and he began to run by back ways and short cuts up the Fullergate to Monjoy's house.

CHAPTER XI.

A HUNDRED POUNDS.

HE burst into the room where Monjoy sat gazing spiritlessly at his empty hearth.

"Be quick, without ye want Ellah done for," he said.

"What's that?" Monjoy asked, turning a haggard face.

"Rouse ye; they're for Ellah now, Mish and a dozen rough 'uns."

"Where?" said Monjoy, rising.

"I' th' 'Fullers.' Haste ye."

He threw him his cap and began to bundle him about, and Monjoy roused a little from his profound depression. In the Fullergate they broke into a run, and in three minutes they were at the inn. Half-way up the back stairs they found the landlord huddled against the handrail, white-faced, fear-ridden, and listening. They sprang past him, and reached the door of the loom-loft; a low hum of voices sounded inside it. It was

locked, and Monjoy struck the heavy door with his fist. "Open!" he cried; and the sound of voices ceased.

"Who is it?" somebody called.

"I—Monjoy. Open the door."

The bolt was shot back, and the two men entered.

The heavy loom-frame filled the greater part of the room, and about it stood a dozen—a score—it was not easy to tell how many men. Immediately Murgatroyd cried in a high voice, "Ye've come, but ye'll mind that that were sattled at th' Slack!" In his hand he held a clasp-knife.

Swiftly Monjoy's eyes sought Ellah. He lay, a motionless heap, in one corner. He was dressed in his shirt only, and he was blackened from head to foot. Monjoy strode past the loom-seat and turned Ellah's face up; it was of the colour of a bruised and rotten plum, and Monjoy drew in a long sibilant breath between his teeth.

"Whose work's this?" he roared.

Murgatroyd had given a quick glance about him; a nod or two backed him up, and he stood before Monjoy.

"Keep ye to your business, Arthur," he said, truculently. "All were sattled. Ye needn't look at th' knife—nobody's been cutten yet; 'tis us tak's ho'd now. We foun' him all black like that; we've naughbut gotten out o' him how mich he got for th' job, and it were a hunderd pound.

Now *we*'ve a bit o' business. . . . Where were we, lads ? ”

“ Me an' Leventoes, an' Dick o' Dean, five ; that's fifteen,” a voice said.

“ Fifty-five, then, and Pim 'll mak' it sixty.”

On one of the uprights of the loom Mish was cutting a tally of notches ; he cut another notch. “ Charley an' Belch, how mich ? ” he demanded ; and the low hum continued.

Monjoy had turned to Ellah again. A man standing by him remarked over his shoulder, “ He'd been trying to climb up th' chimley when we come ; he's all for smout-holes now,” and turned again to the business in hand.

“ Take him on the other side, James,” Monjoy muttered ; “ he's horrible to see this way.” They began with their handkerchiefs to wipe the soot from Ellah's face.

However he had come by it, there was little doubt of Ellah's madness now. He shuddered convulsively under their hands, and fell back in fear into his corner. The corner was foul where he had lain for days. Cope had known better than to put this figure into the box ; and Monjoy groaned. “ I didn't think to bring him to this when I cast him down,” he said with a shudder.

The ominous low conference continued. They pressed about the loom, and by and by Murgatroyd said briefly, “ Seventy-three. How much you, Hell Harry ? ”

"A month's weyvin' ; I ha' nowt else."

Mish made a scratch by the side of his tally, and all at once Monjoy stepped towards him.

"What is this ?" he demanded. "D'ye hear ? What is it ?"

"A hunderd pounds," said a sullen voice from the other side of the loom. "He's paid it, he's ha' it back"; and "Ay, ay," came the consenting murmur.

"Who shall ? . . . Damnation, Murgatroyd, but you shall not play with me !"

Mish's brow was drawn into a "V" between his calf-licks ; he turned a menacing face over his shoulder.

"Will ye stick to your own business ?" he said savagely—"wi'out ye want to come in wi' us——?"

"How do you know he had a hundred pounds ? The man's mad !"

"He come down th' chimley jabbering it right eniff. Look here ; if ye want to know, we fotched him down th' same as they fotch th' sweeper-lads down. If ye don't know how that is, ye can look at th' grate."

Monjoy glanced at the grate ; it was a litter of white straw-ashes.

"Ay, did you ?" said Monjoy grimly. Murgatroyd was turning to his tally again ; he set his hand on his shoulder and spun him round as if he had been a skittle. Mish drew back the hand that held the knife.

"Ye've been warned——"

"We'll talk about warnings in a minute. Listen, you, and every man here. If a finger's laid on that man in the corner it shall be the beginning of a nasty business. That's my promise."

Murgatroyd had greenish hazel eyes; they were on Monjoy's like those of a cat. Suddenly he made an exclamation of contempt.

"On *him*?" he sneered.—"Nobody wants to touch *him*. But if ye'll speak up now to how much your share is ye shall ha' your chance at Cope when th' lots is drawn."

Monjoy took a step back. After a moment he said unsteadily, "So you're buying blood, are you?"

"Not right what ye might call 'buying'; anybody's won't do. Come in or stay out; it's all one to us. . . . Will ye say two for your cousin, Dick o' Dean?"

James Eastwood cried out suddenly from the corner where Ellah crouched.

"Ye're all wrong; he can't ha' had it!" he cried. "Listen to what Emmason telled me! Rewards is paid on a sheriff's certificate, and not of a month after conviction. It isn't a month yet—d'ye hear?—it isn't a month. . . ."

His voice ceased as suddenly as it had begun; he seemed to realise that Cope was not sticking at irregularities; and none took the trouble to answer him.

Monjoy had fallen back quite to the wall. He

steadied himself against it with one hand, and when he moved the hand it left its shape in moisture on the plaster. Now and then one of the group glanced at him, but they were intent on their own affair, and presently Mish said, "Well, let t'other stand ower, then." He began to whisper, and Monjoy closed his eyes and continued to leave the moist prints on the plaster wall. Dazed, he strove to think.

One thing only was clear to him : he would have nothing to do with the revolting business that was being whispered about him ; and again he drew in his breath between his teeth. Cope had not returned—might not return ; should he return . . . and, moreover, his blood would be shed with Monjoy's knowledge. The sweat trickled in streams from his hands ; his eyes opened and rested with dread on Murgatroyd and on those who in this also were ready to follow any lead that was given them. Murgatroyd had taken a bunch of string from his pocket and was cutting it into lengths against the loom-timber—a long one—a short one—no, another long one. Monjoy watched, stupid and fascinated. Murgatroyd set the ends neatly together and bound them loosely about with another string ; and suddenly Monjoy cried out aloud :

"Stop—stop—you shall not do it——"

Every head turned, and Murgatroyd advanced with the bundle of strings.

"Weant we?" he said, the "V" of his brow deepening.

"Play and lose, and stand your stake; but no, no, that's murder!" Monjoy cried. "I'll not have it, I say! I, Arthur Monjoy—Harry—Charley—I tell you, d'you hear? He shall' be warned; I'll warn him——"

And, knowing in his heart all the time that he had now less authority than the least of them, he continued to command, to swear, to threaten impotently.

A menacing growl rose.

"He's turning ageean us, is he?"—"Mun we raise another hunderd?"—"Mak' him draw too an' stand his lot!"

They pressed upon him, and a man raised his hand. Mish's villainous face was within an inch or two of his own; and with that Monjoy became himself again. His red head rising above them all, he took a stride into their midst and with a sweep of his arm put the foremost back. He set his fists to his hips and leaned slightly forward, and his eyes moved from one man to another, dwelling here and there, as if he sought to remember their faces. His voice now came steadily.

"Very well, my lads," he cried. "Get on with your drawing. Draw for your murder—for your torture at the Slack for all I know—I know the wolves you are. Eastwood and I are taking Ellah away, chance you change your fickle minds and

wreak something on him, too ; but we'll see you draw first. I want to see who the lucky wolves are so that I can watch them.—Into the cap with the strings, Mish my lad ; you've a wolf's chough yourself for blood. About it. Remember, you're without me and Eastwood and Moon and Raikes, and the best of us. We stick at shooting and cutting and filling men's breeches with red-hot coals. Up with the strings, Mish ; only mark you, the next information that's given will be by a man who's coming round to his senses, not taking leave of 'em. Draw, wolves ! ”

There was a howl, but Mish's voice sounded above it.

“ Damn him, draw ! We've telled him, haven't we ? What are they doing to Jim Northrop and Will Haigh now ?—Gi'e me th' cap ! ”

A sinister scene followed. The short strings of the bundle were to be the fatal draws, and Mish held them in the cap with the even ends showing above his thumb. “ Stay ! ” he cried, “ I claim first draw ! ”

He took the end of a string in his fingers and pulled it out. There was a sudden intaking of breath and a silence ; Mish had drawn a short string the first time. “ That's nooan so bad,” said Mish, thrusting the string into his pocket. One wolf.

Another man drew, and another, and a fourth. Hands faltered and shook, and while some watched

fascinated, others turned their faces away as they drew, looking at the string only when sounds and indications about them assured them that they had missed. At the tenth draw there was a short checked cry ; Dick o' Dean had drawn a string no longer than the width of the palm in which it lay. Two chances were accounted for ; and men now pressed forward and drew more freely, and Mish paused to arrange the disordered ends. Monjoy watched without moving a muscle, and presently the pale youth called Charley backed whimpering away from his turn. There were but half a dozen strings left, and one wolf had not yet met his luck.

"Clog him up !" cried Mish, savagely ; and the youth was thrust forward.

He shook his fingers free of the string he had drawn with a cry of terror, and Mish tossed the remaining strings aside and set the cap on his head. The lot was complete—Charley, Dick o' Dean, and Murgatroyd himself.

"Humph !" said Monjoy ; "very prettily done. Now, James, fetch a blanket and we'll get Ellah away."

Charley, on his knees, was uttering agonized cries ; he had drawn wrong—had drawn wrong. Somebody lifted him to his feet and supported him. James Eastwood had unbarred the door and disappeared ; he returned with a blanket, in which they wrapped Ellah. Another man had brought a draught of brandy for Charley, and Monjoy took

up Ellah in his arms and moved towards the door.

"To the 'Pipes,' now, James," he said; "I may take him home with me later. Stand on one side, wolves——"

They allowed him to pass, and at the door he turned.

"Don't forget, Mish," he said.

"'Tis ye had best remember," Mish replied.

* * * * *

The white cotton blinds of Sally Northrop's bedroom were drawn against the sun, but the windows were open outside them. From time to time they moved gently in the light breeze, and the shadows of the house-martens flitted across them. The chamber was softly aglow with light, and it smelt of some preparation of lemon that Dooina Benn had supplied Cicely with for the sprinkling of it. Cicely's face was composed and grave, and the third finger of the hand with which every few minutes she felt Sally's low pulse was ringless.

So slowly did the coverlet rise to Sally's breathing that its movement was hardly noticeable. At long intervals there came a light purring sound from her lips. The little wicker cradle on the floor was trimmed with gaudy ribbons and muslin, and its patchwork quilt was of Sally's own making.

Round the front of the house there came the sound of steps. They passed up the alley, and

there came a knock at the kitchen door. Cicely descended and called softly, "Who's there?"

"Arthur and your father. You must open the door, Cicely."

She drew back the bar. Arthur carried Ellah in his arms in the blanket. "It's your cousin," he said; "make a place for him in the niche."

She drew back the curtain on the string, and Monjoy placed Ellah in the niche, bidding Eastwood watch. "I'll come upstairs with you, Cicely," he said, and she led the way to Sally's chamber.

"How is she?" he asked, bending over the deeply sleeping woman.

"Very low."

"Has she known anything?"

"She hasn't stirred more than you see her now since morning; she's to be kept so. What's wrong with Eastwood?—No, no, don't tell me any more o' that business. I want no word o' that——" She added the last words hastily, and her hands made a movement as if to hold some physical thing away from her.

"I'll take him away if it's too much for you; but there's nothing to fear from him now," Monjoy murmured, not looking at her; "and—Cicely—for the other business, I've something you must—must—hear——"

"No, no!" she muttered, repeating her gesture and catching at her upper lip with her teeth. "I can't—I can't—oh, it's cruel to force it on me

now! Haven't I care enough?" Her breathing was interrupted, her mouth drawn, and her bosom heaved.

"Over much, lass; but you must hear me——"

Then, seeming still to struggle and to hold something away from her, she began to talk low and rapidly.

"Leave me quiet, to see it through. To-morrow—to-night, for all I know—the blinds may ha' to be drawn and the seeming-glasses covered—you men know nothing o' this—this is our part—the waiting—always waiting—. Yonder's one who's waited, and look at her!"

"Oh, hush, hush, Cicely!" But she continued more quickly.

"Oh, ye don't know! Heavens o' happiness, ye tell us, isn't too much for us, and see the hell o' misery that comes instead! All the things you're going to do for us, you in your pride . . . but the little that will fit us, all we ask o' ye, no, no! . . . Ay, ye're away forgetting, busy and forgetting all the time; if this turn misses o' happiness, the next 'll do it; and what is it that we ask in our hearts? A bite and sup, a hearth and a babe and a kiss. I wed ye unthanking, Arthur—ay, ye know I did—but I ha' thought since—the time women do think, God help 'em! You never dazzled me wi' your talk o' riches, never; but the little a woman asks is too much for a man to give, it seems. I wonder what you'd

ha' thought if you'd heard Sally before she took the draught! . . . Courting again, she was, with Jim, o' spring evenings down the deans (forgive me, lass!), and him with her hair about his neck and suchlike, and sometimes her reckoning to be the man and toying wi' him and kissing him here and there, as lads kiss lasses, and all their tricks and babble. . . . Ay!" she cried, excitedly, "you've brought it all back to me now, all that I've held away for days that I might nurse and watch and tend the bairn and be a bit o' use! . . . And when they were wed, what more did she ask than just that? Would a golden crown ha' suited her better? Nay, nay! It's less we get after we're wed. Happen men'll know more of it i' th' next world, for they know little enough i' this.—But go your way, Arthur; I've told ye mine."

He had not once lifted his head; he did not do so now.

"I'm making my way yours, if you'll go it with me," he said in a low voice.

"Ay, I don't doubt this has shaken you all up a bit, but men soon get over it," she replied.

"Well, you've a right to say what you will, and I'll not tell you what's shaken me; but, Cicely, little or much, I'm here to offer you all you ask."

"Then all I ask, Arthur, is that you leave me. What use am I in this house if I begin to think?

You've brought me another of 'em, too; then keep away from me, lest I break down. I'll do the best I can."

Sad and broken-spirited, he gazed down at the cradle.

"Yes, I'll go," he said. "But I'd hoped you'd see in me a man you haven't known yet, humbled, ay, and even his body in danger. I'm no king of Back o' th' Mooin now; when I've done what I'm going to do both sides will hunt me. I'd hoped, too, we might help one another, you and I."

She began to tremble. "What is it, Arthur?" she asked quickly.

"Don't ask me, except that this is my finish with it. I'll tell you what it is I offer you now. All's closing in; and they won't stop at this; and I offer you danger for a portion, and not so much as a roof to your head it may be, and it may be, Cicely, just the same lot as hers stretched on the bed yonder. But a new man goes with it, Cis——"

"Arthur!" she cried, sharply, as if transfixed with a sudden pain; and for the first time since he had entered he looked up at her face. Her eyes were bright with a starting of tears, and her lips were parted and drawn downwards. He did not raise his hands, but in a moment her head was on his breast.

There was a murmuring in the market-place; the crowd was returning.

She was sobbing and speaking against the cloth

of his coat, and his head was bowed to catch her words.

"Oh, all the time I've longed for it—all my life—but I didn't think to get it like this!" she was murmuring brokenly. "Oh, among harsh and grudging folk I ha' thought o' gentle and bonnie things, and soft and that! And I'd thought never to know 'em now, after I'd said 'Yes' to you, Arthur. And you've right done wi' it, love?"

"Ay, sweetheart, come what may."

"Oh, ay—ay—then whatever it costs, even that o' yon bed, I'll hug it and think mysel' happy! . . . And you'll come really courting me now, dear—not like the last?"

"Kiss me, Cissie. . . ."

Their lips met. Thrice they kissed; and then she murmured, "And now that I have you I must send you away! Oh, I have so much to do! But you'll come in the morning, love?"

"Yes, yes," he promised her, with a brave smile.

But as it happened, he was not to come in the morning, for that afternoon all Horwick was thrown into a new commotion. All the afternoon the square had remained thronged, and at five o'clock more men began to run in, as they had done earlier in the day. At half-past five, a chaise, driven at the head of a company of soldiers, passed down the Fullergate, and in the chaise sat Jeremy Cope, his spectacles off, nodding and blinking, with one short leg curled up beneath him.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CLOTH MERCHANT.

EVERY man who had anything to conceal—a file, a suspicious-looking pair of shears, a paper or snuffbox of clippings—made haste to conceal it; and for that which was already hidden they sought safer and yet safer places. There was a deal of the dangerous stuff about. During the building of the furnaces, filings and such small matters had been disdained, and for weeks had accumulated uncollected. They began now to rummage chimneys, dusty rafters, the upper back-shelves of cupboards, and to hide it again in their gun-cartridges, in hollows they burned in the galley-baulks of their looms (tallowing all over again), in holes in yards and gardens, in the linings of their jackets and caps. The work began within an hour of Cope's return; it lasted throughout the night. Even neighbours were scarce to be trusted, for no man knew but in his own extremity another might turn against him. And as they ran here and there, hiding and re-hiding, they planned itineraries of escape in the last resort.

Before the next day was two hours old they had

reason to congratulate themselves on their celerity ; for before Monjoy's house in the Fullergate there stood an empty chaise and a score of redcoats with muskets. Monjoy's door stood open.

He had not slept there, however, and presently there issued from the door Cope—the same waddling, blinking, imbecile Cope—and an officer. Except for his burins, his sandbag and engraver's globe of water, they had found nothing indicative of Monjoy's trade, and a soldier stepped forward and set a seal on the lock of the door. Cope hoisted himself into the chaise, the officer gave orders, and the party swung off down the Fullergate. It was half-past five in the morning. They halted opposite Matthew Moon's warehouse, and Cope lowered himself from the chaise again.

They would have forced the door, but it was of unexpected strength, and Moon lived within a stone's throw. A hasty consultation was held ; the officer rode off to demand the key in the King's name ; and in a quarter of an hour he had returned with Matthew Moon himself, clad in his shirt and breeches.

"Good-morning, Mr. Moon, good-morning," giggled Cope. "I fear I have disturbed your rest.—Come, lose no time."

Then Matthew Moon began an extraordinarily loud altercation. He would see Mr. Cope's warrant. If Mr. Cope had no warrant he should answer this. Let him see the warrant. Cope produced it. It

was signed by Parker, and Moon stormed. A search-warrant on Horwick premises signed by a Ford magistrate! Was that legal? Was that in due form?

"Ask your friend Emmason," Cope^h returned, and the merchant continued his clamour. A very clever man might have supposed he was making a disturbance for the purpose of warning somebody inside the warehouse, and Cope was a clever man. He chuckled, and the merchant grew violent.

"I've warned ye, ye clammy, filthy hell-toad!" he vociferated; and Cope turned away. Already the officer was flinging back the bar of the door. They entered, a couple of soldiers following them.

The ground floor of the warehouse was little more than an office, with pieces of grey cloth ranged methodically on racks all round it, and a long counter running down the middle. The ledgers were in a locked cupboard, and for the present Cope contented himself with setting a seal on the lock. There was no cellar, no fireplace, or chimney; the floor was of stone flags, and the ceiling of beams and boards without underdrawing. Moon obstructed the men at every turn, swearing outrageously, and Cope's thick-lidded eyes never for a fraction of an instant left his face. "You make a deal of noise, Mr. Moon," he remarked ironically. "The next floor, gentlemen, I think."

The first floor was cumbered with bales and wicker skeps, and had double crane doors, through

the chink of the back pair of which a vertical glimpse of trees and daylight showed. "It will be necessary to disturb your stock," Cope observed, still watching the merchant unwinkingly, and the two soldiers began to move the heavy bales from the walls, examining every foot for a possible communication with the adjoining warehouse. They found none. The whole building was no more than a shell, and Moon could not have moved a muscle of his face without Cope observing it. Then all at once Cope took the taper and wax and seal from the soldier and began himself to seal the padlocks of the crane doors. He bent over a padlock, and Moon continued to rail behind him.

Then happened a very quick piece of work. Like a flash Cope turned from his sealing, to surprise any change in Moon's expression. How the merchant had known that he would turn at that moment he could hardly have told, save that not until then had the supervisor ceased to watch him. And though Moon's brow was moist and beaded with sweat, his lips were twitched into something like a smile. Cope's hand shook on the seal, but the merchant thought he knew now where they were. He kicked one of the bales.

"There's almost room for a man in one of these," he said mockingly.

"Upstairs," ordered Cope curtly, and they passed up the dark, dusty staircase to the garret.

In the garret where Monjoy had worked, the

heavy two-legged table lay a-tilt just within the door, and his hearth, the grimy bricks of which lay scattered over the floor, had been newly dismantled. Save for one empty box, all else—tests, crucibles, bellows, Monjoy himself—had gone. Overhead the structure of the rafters showed, and only single boards divided the garret from the chamber beneath. Cope stood for a minute blinking at the lately-disturbed bricks of the little refining-furnace; then he looked rather sheepishly at Matthew Moon.

"My compliments, Mr. Moon," he said, with evident chagrin. "That was very creditably well done. Long ago I had some opinion of your ability. Now, I do not see—no, I do not see—how this could have been improved. Hn! hn! In the street I didn't doubt of finding here what I wanted. I began to doubt a little down below . . . yes, I make you my compliments on having gained perhaps half an hour. Nay," he seemed suddenly not altogether to disrelish his own discomfiture, "'twas excellent, and you find favour for it. Ah, well! Seal these doors also, men, and downstairs again quickly."

The two sets of crane doors were quickly sealed, and they passed down the narrow staircase again. Before they had reached the basement Monjoy was in the garret.

Even for that perilous hiding-place he had had to scramble. The double doors that gave on the

crofts and gardens at the back swung inwards, filling the dingy garret with a flood of morning light. The bar parted, not in the middle, which was sealed, but at one end, and beyond the doors was only the thickness of the wall, the sheer drop, and the sky and the mounting larks. On the sill, where he had stood, lay the apparatus, and the garret became dark again as Monjoy softly closed the doors behind him. He stretched himself along the floor, rather pale, for to any eyes that might have chanced to view the back of the building he had been about as publicly concealed as the Queen Anne in the niche of the Piece Hall. He lay there thinking till close on midday.

Long before midday, however, Matthew Moon's own house had been searched from cellar to garret ; but the famous books of the Association were not found there. (Indeed, when they did at last come to light it was very far from Horwick town.) Cope was losing no time. By one o'clock John Raikes's house had been gone through—John Raikes, who had handled most of the silver ; but somebody had found time to do goitred John a neighbourly service during the night, and nothing was discovered. Horwick was in a ferment, that rose during the afternoon to a panic, for a quiet, obscure member of the Association was visited. Who would have supposed Cope had ever heard of that man ? It did not occur to them that Cope visited, also, the houses of two men who had notoriously held

aloof ; no, Cope knew more than they knew themselves. Then the searching slackened a little. A soldier mounted guard at the door of Matthew Moon's warehouse, and another marched a beat opposite the door of his house. Cope's own house was guarded back and front, and soldiers smoked their pipes in the shop of Cole the clogger. The rest built a fire in the market-place between the pieceboards, stacked their arms like an encampment, and made themselves comfortable for the August night.

James Eastwood, making haste to his own house at Wadsworth, was the first to carry the news there. Thence it spread to Back o' th' Mooin. There it seemed to serve as a signal for a succession of drinking bouts, in which Booth and Brotherton men vied with their fellows of Holdsworth and Fluett in demonstrations of brutality, so that the quiet and decent folk kept their houses even from their friends. Murgatroyd paraded his formidable dog without muzzle. Dick o' Dean was back and forth every day as far as the Shelf, where the two men hung in chains, and the youth Charley had not been a minute sober since the draught of brandy that had been given him after the drawing of the fatal string. Pim o' Cuddy, in Wadsworth, stuck to the parson's heels as if his very cloth were a protection, and he blubbered in his sleep (they said) that he had been led away—led away—.

Whether by Cope's favour or not, Matthew

Moon was suffered to go about unmolested ; but he was watched at every turn, knew it, and even when alone no more betrayed himself than he had done when Cope had wheeled so swiftly round from the sealing of the crane door. Crossing the market-place, he noticed two or three strangers in plain clothes among the soldiers, and these seemed to hang constantly about the door of the "Cross Pipes." At first he felt a wrathful mounting of his blood. Had Cope not finished with that house yet ? Then suddenly his brows contracted ; he thought he saw the reason ; and he began to plot again.

A butcher's lad, an impudent, whistling young rascal, called at his house for orders for meat. Matthew gave the lad a letter, with precise instructions, for Dooina Benn, to be given to her at her own home. Dooina was now taking turns with Cicely to watch Sally, who had been given another draught.

"You're sure you understand, Teddy ?" said the merchant anxiously, and the lad gave him an intelligent look and a grimace.

"Ye don't want it ta'en straight to the 'Pipes,' ye mean ?" he said, and the merchant nodded and gave him sixpence.

The lad delivered the message to Dooina (with whom Cole the clogger had taken up his quarters), and so it came to Cicely Monjoy, who read it and thrust it immediately into the kitchen fire. It

informed her that for the present Arthur was safe, and that if all should seem quiet about two o'clock in the morning she was to take a basket of provisions to Webster's stackyard, a mile out of Horwick, near the dean in which she had returned Arthur his ring. She was to do this on successive nights, and should she not see Arthur, she was to do it none the less. The crafty merchant contrived, also, to communicate with Webster, who owned the stackyard. Except for himself, Matthew Moon, cloth merchant, there was none to set a spoke in Cope's wheel, and he took to ways a little more devious than his ordinary with readiness. "He'll watch his wife, will he?" he muttered. "Well, wives won't tell what they don't know."

In the meantime Arthur Monjoy sat on the empty box in the garret up the Fullergate. Except for a crust that he had slipped into his pocket in preparing for his busy night, he had not eaten since the previous midday, and it was now evening—Friday evening. Matthew, however, would see to that, if Matthew still had his liberty; and, in anticipation, Monjoy had occupied himself during the day by shredding to pieces an old end of crane-rope and knotting the fibres together. Towards eight o'clock (as he knew from the chiming of the Piece Hall clock) he opened his crane doors an inch or two, and paid out his length of string till it touched earth; then he fastened the other end of it to the empty box and tightened his belt.

He was oddly cheerful. One immediate care only was on his mind—the warning of Cope. Whether or not it was a duty to Cope, it was now one to Cicely, and he cogitated long without result. Some way would, however, present itself.

Between eight and nine he felt a gentle tug at his string. He started up, and then, suddenly irresolute, stood with one hand on the bar of the double door and the other pulling at his whiskers. He listened intently; somebody below gave a little dental whistle—“*Hey, Johnny Cope, are ye waukin’ yet.*” That tune might be from either friend or foe, for Cope was malignant enough to use the air that had been his own mocking. Monjoy put his hand into his pocket for a coin and stooped to the ray of light that came through the crack of the doors.

It was shield—‘answer.’ He knelt, set his hand to the bar, and opened the doors. It was clear sunset. He opened the doors wide and put his head and shoulders out. Looking down, at first he could not see anybody; then, all but hidden in the docks and grass and nettles at the foot of the wall, heedless of stings, taking cover for sheer delight in the fun, he saw Teddy.

“Sss, Teddy!” he called softly; the boy was fastening a bundle to the string. “Can you hear? —Not that tune!——”

Teddy comprehended, and gave the sharp cry of the pewit, that comes naturally to the throat of a lad, and is scarce to be imitated by a man.

"Yes, that'll do. Quick!"

"Throw them things down; they show," the boy called up; and Monjoy dropped the phials and pestles and mortars one by one from the sill.

"Right?" he said, and Teddy nodded. Monjoy drew the bundle up quickly and closed the doors again.

He read Matthew Moon's letter at the chink, half a line at a time. It was brief. Eastwood was in Wadsworth. Nothing had come of the searching yet. They had been through such-and-such houses, and so forth. It said nothing of the errand on which he was sending Cicely. Arthur was to remain where he was and not to use the rope he sent yet (it was an inch-rope, and very long). They seemed to be giving him, Matthew, his liberty, that he might have a chance to commit himself; that was all right, and Teddy was a good lad. Monjoy ate his supper in darkness, stretched himself on the floor, and soon slept soundly. Early the following morning, Saturday, he heard noises downstairs in the warehouse and glided noiselessly to his doors again. They had come for the books of Matthew Moon's business, but they departed quickly.

Monjoy had had vague ideas of warning Cope in person—harebrained notions of disguise, of getting to the house adjoining Cope's, passing from dormer to dormer under cover of the pear-tree, of visiting Cope in his bed. Presently he abandoned

them. Moon must carry the message. He split a board from his empty box, and from the bricks of the broken hearth he scraped with his knife a quantity of soot. He mixed this with spittle, and then, making a pen of a splinter of wood wrapped round with his handkerchief, he rubbed into the dingy board a letter. It was neatly enough done considering the materials; he was an engraver; and he smiled as he worked, for this at least was as honest as Cicely could desire. He blew Cicely a kiss from his prison, and then he split his board from end to end that it might be carried doubled with the message inside. About eight o'clock he heard Teddy's call.

"Mr. Moon, Teddy," he said, throwing down the pieces when he had drawn up his bundle.—"I say, Teddy, pewits don't nest in nettles, you know."

"Keep low, Arthur—we'll get you away," quoth Teddy, with huge importance. "Cope's been to Wadsworth to-day."

"Ay? You're a great man, Teddy. Off with you!" Monjoy answered; and a quarter of an hour later Teddy was marching through the soldiery in the market-place with his flat boards shouldered like a gun. The soldiers laughed, and one of them flung a bone from the pot at him.

At warning Cope, however, Matthew Moon demurred; he would have nothing to do with it, and informed Monjoy so on the Sunday. Himself (he

said), he would be well pleased to see Cope stuck like a pig so he were not required to do it himself : hell would be the richer by a devil as cruel as any it held. Sign it, too ! Was Monjoy mad ? . . . Teddy had brought ink and paper this time, and Monjoy wrote back : Very well, then he would see to it himself, and that very night. Cope was getting near the wolves' country at Wadsworth. Once out of the garret, there would be no getting back ; therefore Matthew need not trouble himself to send further provisions.—Teddy bore off this answer, but the pewit's call came again soon after the Piece Hall clock had struck eleven. Matthew Moon cursed him for a fool, but yielded. " But I'll not give him your name," he wrote, " unless you want to lug me in too. He's able to arrest me any minute, and I want to have you out of the way first. No names, except those of the three men."

" All right, Teddy," said Monjoy.

And Cicely carried food by night to the stackyard, wasting her cunning had she but known it. It was only a question of time before she was followed, and (to come to that at once) it happened on that very Sunday evening. Reaching the stackyard, she found herself forestalled, and she lay low with her basket under a wall, listening in an agony of fear to the voices of three strangers, who talked in an outhouse. She heard her husband's name spoken. They were questioning Webster, the owner of the stackyard ; and it was much that

she did not throw herself at their feet and implore mercy for him there and then. Matthew had judged wisely to keep her in ignorance. The voices ceased ; she heard steps ; she thrust her basket into the roadside weeds and fled. Dooina Benn had to watch Sally that night, and by morning a further calamity had happened. This was the disappearance from the niche in the kitchen of Eastwood Ellah. He had scarcely stirred since he had been put there, and, maybe, they had grown a little careless in watching him ; anyway, he was gone. Neighbours were sent to search for him. Cicely was calmer, but very pale, and she started at sudden sounds.

At nine o'clock on the Monday morning the soldiers in the clogger's shop saw Matthew Moon walk up the croft. They stretched their necks for a sight of the man who had publicly abused Jeremy Cope—Cope of Bow Street, the most ruthless man-hunter in the land (you had to leave Horwick to learn of what consequence the Horwick folk were). Moon demanded of the sentry at the door whether Mr. Cope was up, and at a sign from the sentry one of the soldiers went inside to announce the visitor.

Cope, in a grey dressing-gown, was drinking chocolate at a desk and opening letters. He rubbed his hands as if with pleasure at seeing the merchant.

"You honour me, Mr. Moon—honour me, honour me—hn !—(leave us, you). Be seated, Mr. Moon, be seated,"

"I'll stand," said the merchant; "my business won't take so long."

"Nay, sit, and let me ring for a cup of chocolate. I failed—hn!—I fear I failed a little the other morning in my expression of esteem for you. To tell you the truth, Mr. Moon, I was for the moment a little chagrined. Let me make amends now—hn! hn! hn!"

"I think you know my handwriting," said the merchant abruptly. "I've something here might advantage ye to read, and when ye've read it I'd be obliged if ye'd gi'e me an attestation ye've seen it. It might come in useful for me if aught were to happen to you."

He handed him a copy of Monjoy's letter. Cope read it with perfect composure.

"So you want a sort of receipt for this? Irregular, irregular, Mr. Moon. Suppose, with your indemnity in your pocket, you were to change your mind, and even to take a hand in my despatch yourself?"

"I lose little for want o' asking; and for changing my mind, I've been i' one mind all along the sort ye are," the merchant replied imperturbably.

Cope patted the air with his smooth deprecating little gesture.

"Tut, Mr. Moon; I did but jest. It's a superfluous service you render me, but since you transact everything according to rule, I'll give you your discharge of it—hn! hn!" Calmly he endorsed the

letter and handed it back. "Take it, Mr. Moon. Ah, I wish you were not passionate. That's a weakness. Generosity and passion, we cannot afford to entertain them. I say 'we,' because a valuable man is lost in you, Mr. Moon. Fatal, I fear; ah, me!—I tell you, my methods are the only methods. We may have to override the law a little now and then—lawyers will find us legal reasons enough after the event. True, an humble instrument like myself may once in a while be sacrificed; judges will tell us we have exceeded our duty——"

"I think I've warned ye o' them that'll sacrifice ye," interrupted the merchant bluntly, "and now I'll bid ye good morning."

"So soon?" Cope mused. Now I believe, Mr. Moon, that if I had a warrant for your arrest in my pocket at this moment I should detain you, if only for the pleasure of further conversation." His bruised-looking lids blinked rapidly.

"I'm capped if ye haven't," said Moon composedly; "and lawyers to whitewash ye afterwards an' all!"

Cope sighed. "A great pity, a great pity," he mused, and Matthew Moon passed heavily down the stairs.

There awaited him at his house, circuitously conveyed from Cicely Monjoy, a distraught letter, in which she announced that her goings-out at night had been discovered. This news disturbed

him little, as may be imagined, and he took a taper and burned the letter. But it was certain that no time would now be lost in searching the stackyard. He would surely be credited with the dupery, and he now reckoned his time for activity short. Teddy was not about; Matthew strode unhesitatingly across the market-place, and walked into the kitchen of the "Cross Pipes."

Cicely was alone in the kitchen, and the merchant put up his hand warningly.

"Quietly!" he said. "He's safe enough yet—*ssh*! But there's no knowing how little time I have. They'll ha' found out about the stackyard in an hour or two—let me see——"

"Oh, they've found out!" Cicely moaned.

"Quiet, I tell ye! He's not there, and hasn't been. Let me see——"

"Not there?" whispered Cicely, dazed; and Moon interrupted her with an impatient gesture.

"Ha' ye anywhere in Wadsworth ye can put him? (For God's sake stop that choking!) Listen! I'll send Dooina here; get ye off to Wadsworth as fast as ye can. Find out where he's to be put, and then back to me. Where's your bonnet?—Hark! They're forming up for the stackyard now. Quick! on with your bonnet!"

In five minutes Cicely was on her way to Wadsworth, by near cuts and bypaths, for the soldiers were already marching along the road below her to Webster's stackyard.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SCOUT.

As by degrees folk had come out of the daze into which Cope's arrival had thrown them, growls and murmurs had begun to be heard. A town's meeting had been held (none knew exactly by whom convened), in an upper chamber of the Piece Hall, and their temper had begun to show then, for half-a-dozen soldiers who claimed admittance "by order" had been bundled out with little ceremony. Back o' th' Mooniners assembled in bands. At one house a search had been resisted, and scuffling had taken place. The soldiers no longer had the square to themselves, for groups buzzed angrily among the Piece Hall pillars and the blinds of the houses had been raised again. There had been stone-throwing up the Fuller-gate. A deputation had waited on Cope at his house, and Cope had again been uncontrollably shaken with silent mirth.

There were four new stacks in Webster's yard, and a three-quarters cut old one. They were not thatched, but covered by wooden roofs that ran up and down corner-posts on pulleys. Hundreds

of people followed the soldiers thither, and some of the Back o' th' Mooners were talking their jargon again. Webster watched sullenly from his door the soldiers surround his premises ; but the mob could not be kept out, and the yard was packed. They knew now what or whom the officer in charge looked to find there ; word was passed that an orderly had ridden the previous evening up the Fullergate for more troops, that were to advance to Wadsworth and Back o' th' Moon itself ; and the crowd surged this way and that, no man using force, but of formidable force in the mass. The surrounding of the premises was futile ; the officer in charge gave sharp orders ; and with bayonets fixed a double rank of men facing outwards formed a lane from the gate to the stacks. The rest drew up in close order out in the road.

Down the bayonet-guarded lane four men advanced with a ladder. It was placed against the foremost stack, and a man went up it with a pistol in his hand and crawled under the wooden roof. "He'll ha' little time to use a pistol if Arthur gets a hand on him i' yonder," the watchers muttered ; and the next moment they had grown suddenly quiet. By and by the man came out from under the roof again, and the ladder was set up against the next stack. Soon they had searched the tops of the four stacks and thrust rakes and bayonets beneath them.

"Throw the ricks down," the officer ordered.

A storm of remonstrances, oaths, cries, broke forth. Throw down four stacks o' nicely-settled hay! Couldn't they do their rummaging wi'out ruining folk? Who was to set 'em up again? And did they think to take Big Monjoy when all was done?—They were tingling for quarrel; the stacks would serve as well for a pretext as anything else; the disturbing of a sitting hen would have served; and the mob swayed like a flood. A Back o' th' Mooiner had a cudgel; it crossed a bayonet suddenly; there was a rush, and a breach appeared in the red-coated line; and fifty men poured through it, taking the other rank in the backs. The yard was a confusion of struggling men, with a redcoat or a bayonet isolated here and there.

The officer had sprung half-way up the ladder, his back to a stack; he called a cracking order. Down the rank of men in the road three rhythmic movements passed like a wave, and there was a sharp clicking of musket-locks. The tumult changed to a frantic backward pressure—they fell back behind the stacks, against walls, anywhere from the row of levelled muskets. The officer up the ladder called more orders, and those who had formed the lane drew up at right-angles to the others, enclosing two sides of the yard.

“Throw the ricks down,” said the officer; and the ropes of the poles were cut, the heavy roofs hove down into the yard, and the demolition begun.

A couple of hundred soldiers had followed Cope's chaise to Horwick; down the Fullergate that morning there marched from Ford Town thrice that number. At their head rode the Captain Ritchie of whom Horwick had heard. They formed in the market-place, and the captain cantered to Cope's house, and flung himself from his horse.

The two men were closeted for half an hour, and then the captain came out again. He returned to the market-place; and as he gave the order to stack arms he saw a fair-haired woman making great haste beyond the Piece Hall.

Cicely had done the six miles to Wadsworth and back in less than two hours. She found Matthew Moon striding up and down his dining-room with his watch in his hand. He had flung the door open and cried, "Well?" hearing the brushing of her skirts in the passage.

"I've been—let me sit down——" she panted.

"Where have ye found?"

"Oh, I saw all manner o' folk; I went——"

Matthew Moon stamped angrily. "Where have ye found?"

"Oh! . . . the parson's. . . ."

He was surprised; but, "When?" he demanded.

"Yes—yes—anytime——"

Already the merchant had sprung towards the door and disappeared. Presently he returned,

mopping his brow, and sat down opposite Cicely. He gave a long "Ah!" of relief.

"Ye see, Cicely," he explained more quietly, "they've been at Webster's two hours and more now—they must be doing it thoroughly. Now ye can tell me about it."

"Oh, first—where is he?"

"Never mind. Nowhere near the stackyard. Tell me about the parson."

Wadsworth, it appeared from Cicely's tale, was in as great a turmoil as Horwick. Her father had bidden her good-bye, given her an address in Liverpool, and was ready for flight. Many would have been glad to have Arthur, but what was the use? Arthur was safer in Horwick than in Wadsworth. Then, as she had stood distraught in the square, she had seen the parson coming out of the church, and had flown to him and well-nigh dragged him back into the building. There, on her knees, she had supplicated him ("Easy, lass," said Matthew Moon, soothingly)—all was different now—oh! if the parson could but know!—Back o' th' Moon, too, was against him . . . she did not remember all she had said. At last the parson had consented to take him in for a night, during which he would pray for guidance; but it must be understood that after that all must be as God should direct.

"Humph!" said the merchant. "And yourself; when can ye join him?"

"Me?" exclaimed Cicely, "Oh, Matthew, I promised Sally I'd not leave her, and I can't take that word back now——"

"He'll not clear out without ye."

"Oh, he must, he must!"

"I don't think Arthur right knows what that means," Matthew observed drily.

"Then he must trust i' God and wait somewhere while I can meet him. It were the last word I passed Sally afore she went off. I'd see to Jimmy, too, I promised——"

"Sally wouldn't hold ye to it if she knew how it is; let Dooina see to her."

"No, no, I can't; he must do the best he can while I can join him. It must come to pass as it will."

"Heigho! . . . Very well. Is aught heard o' Ellah yet?"

"No," she answered distractedly.

The merchant had not smoked during that day; he now rose for tobacco. Slowly he filled and lighted his pipe, and puffed thoughtfully for a time.

"Well, we'll manage somehow, no doubt," he said composedly at last. "They'll be here for me soon."

"You too!" Cicely moaned; and he made a slight gesture of impatience.

"The devil take the women! . . . Yes, for me; but they've got a prickly piece when they've got me. I've made myself safe, as I've made all safe this many a year; they'd ha' been badly to

seek this last day or two wi'out Matthew. Now listen. Arthur 'll have to chance it for himself now. 'The parson's, Wadsworth, to-night,' was all I said in the note. I'm not going to tell ye where he is, and if ye love him keep away from the parson's—keep out o' Wadsworth. The parson's! Nay, that caps me; who'd ha' thought—hark! . . . Ay, I told ye; they're here. Off wi' ye, quick. Ye can go out o' the front door now; good-bye for a bit. . . . Nay, don't blubber all ower my hands! . . . off wi' ye, and keep as far away from Wadsworth as ye can till all's ready——”

He closed the door behind her and sat down to his pipe again. He had not finished the pipe before he was put under close arrest, with a sentry on either side of his dining-room door.

Monjoy had heard the marching of fresh troops down the Fullergate, and, at intervals during the afternoon, distant confused roars. Of Webster's stackyard he knew nothing. Moon's message came; he was mortally weary of that dingy garret, and he waited impatiently till nightfall. Ten o'clock came, and he still waited, hearing movements out in the town; and then the Piece Hall bell struck eleven. All was quiet, and he opened the crane doors. He flung his rope over the crane-arm, and as he did so saw why Matthew had sent one so long; he could descend by it doubled and take it away instead of leaving it dangling. He stood on the narrow sill,

closed the doors behind him, and slipped to earth. The night was moonless and dark. Quickly he crossed yards and gardens and crofts, and now and then poultry stirred or a dog barked. He had so mapped out his way that he had only two deserted streets to cross. Down the first of them a soldier marched, making noise enough for ten, and Monjoy waited till his tramp sounded in the distance and crossed swiftly and noiselessly. He continued over walls and across more gardens. One light only burned, and he passed it within a hundred yards; it was the window of the chamber where Cicely watched Sally. He stopped for a minute and regarded it; then he passed on again to the fields above the Shelf road. At one o'clock in the morning he knocked at the parson's door and was admitted. He was led to a room on the ground floor without light; a couch was indicated to him, and he was left without a word.

Of the morning's interview with the parson a word or two must be said. It occurred at eight o'clock, in the same room—a little back study on the ground floor. Of the two breakfasts that the parson had laid with his own hands, one—his own—was untouched. The study was but four strides long, and the parson walked and turned, and walked again. His big guest leaned forward in a chair, watching him, and flipping the fingers of his right hand against the knuckles of his left. There were signs that the parson had not slept.

Suddenly he stopped in his walk, and smiled faintly.

"No, I am not one whit nearer to it, Monjoy," he said.

Monjoy hoisted his shoulders ; it was not for him to speak.

"And for what your wife said," the parson continued, "you will understand that I hardly feel at liberty to repeat the whole of it."

"No, no ; Cis would be wrought up ; leave her out, poor lass."

"That, of course," said the parson with a nod ; "but I was thinking more particularly of what she said of you, not of herself. Hm! . . . You'll observe that during our talk I've made no attempt to—let us say, improve the occasion."

This time Monjoy nodded.

"I mustn't say it's more than I should have expected, for I know so few of your calling," he replied. "And I don't know what Cicely said neither. But I myself can say this, that with hands and heart a little less clean I could have been safe away in Liverpool by this. Yes, since last Thursday, too. Don't think I'm careless or swaggering ; I know just what danger I'm in, and from both sides ; let me tell you."

Briefly and honestly he told the parson of the lot-drawing in the loom-loft and of his own share therein.

"And that's the whole of it," he concluded,

"except that if I hadn't stayed behind to tidy Moon's garret up a bit he'd have been worse off than I."

The parson, with a very grave face, drew a chair up opposite Monjoy, and they continued to talk low and earnestly.

* * * * *

At a little after eleven that morning there appeared in Wadsworth an object the like of which had never before entered the hamlet. It was a single-horse, yellow chaise, with an extra horse for tracing, and it was followed up the steep street by an officer leading his horse and a company of redcoats. In the chaise Cope sat nursing one foot.

There was no smile on his face now. He had (so it was afterwards said) stumped raging about his room throughout the night, cursing, gnawing his nails, and spitting like a cat when any approached him. It seemed he had calculated confidently on the stackyard. He now sat in the yellow chaise like some ugly nodding idol, biting the edge of his forefinger unceasingly, and nesting his foot. The procession reached the square. The redcoats did not pile arms; they formed up four deep in front of the "Gooise," and detachments were told off by Captain Ritchie to begin the searching immediately. Another party was sent off to reconnoitre the mountainous Scout; and the yellow chaise, with the supervisor in it, remained drawn up before the

inn door. When Jeremy Cope took command in person matters were to be expedited.

At a little after one o'clock Pim o' Cuddy, who for the last two hours had hidden and rehidden and hidden again his brass kettle down the spout of which sixpences would go (the verger seemed now to think the very possession of money a crime), was taken in the guilty act of putting back the kettle into its original hiding-place. He was haled before Cope, and there he fell and grovelled on the ground before the redoubtable dwarf.

"What's this?" Cope snapped, tearing at his finger with his teeth.

The soldier displayed the kettle.

"Well, and what o' that?" yelled Cope. "Curse your clumsy limbs, find the red man! His jade of a wife was here yesterday—it's odds she's not playing the same trick twice—skip, ye ham-faced fool! Set your heel on that worm first—skip!"

The Scout shimmered in the heat, and spots of red straggled here and there among the bracken and birches and teazels. Besides these, many dark figures moved and clustered, Wadsworth men, Horwick men, men from Booth and Brotherton and Back o' th' Mooon. Down in the village the search-parties slowly ascended the street and began in the square and the houses that stood back; and Cope still gnawed at his finger in the yellow chaise, now and then striking the wood with his fist in his mortification.

At two o'clock Captain Ritchie approached him.

"When what is in progress is concluded, there only remains the Parsonage," he announced.

"Then search it, can't ye?" cried Cope, with an oath. "What d'ye think you're here for—to talk?"

The officer drew himself up.

"I would remind you, Mr. Cope, that you're not addressing a trooper," he said stiffly; and Cope spluttered and spat.

"O—my—dear—God! . . . Is this a time for your airs and dignities? Will you make dainty with your seminary manners when—aaaah!"

The left-hand lamp-glass of the yellow chaise was shattered by a bullet. The candle leaped out, cut in two. Echoes were following the report, and a puff of smoke drifted slowly along the edge of the Scout. Captain Ritchie sprang aside.

"Fire as you are!" he ordered; "mind the others——"; and, save for a figure that was seen running far along the skyline, every man on the face of the Scout had dropped for cover. The muskets came up as if for birds; quick dropping shots rang out; and sharp cracks from the soldiers up the Scout seemed to answer them like echoes.

"Draw this chaise to one side," said Cope, biting at his finger again.

Captain Ritchie strode up the lane to the parson's house and knocked loudly at the door. The parson himself answered the knock.

"You know whom it is we seek?" the officer said curtly.

The parson inclined his head.

"We must be assured of your house also. It is my desire to respect your cloth——"

The parson returned his steady look.

"I take that to mean that, on my word, you are willing to forego a search?"

"Yes."

The parson lied like a layman, without a quiver.

"I pass it you," he said; and immediately the officer retired.

By half-past two the searching of Wadsworth was completed.

It was much that a chaise had got as far as Wadsworth; legs alone could clear the Scout. A man was despatched with a couple of horses to strike the Causeway lower down the valley and then to wait on the heights, and Cope descended from the chaise with the broken lamp-glass. At that, out stepped the parson from his house, and earnestly besought him to remain behind.

"Look!" he cried, pointing up the Scout, that seemed to crawl with ascending figures, "and not a man among them but bears you the worst will in the world! If not for your own safety, yet to save these from a deadly sin——"

Cope struck at the air with his hand.

The captain added his entreaties. His presence was unnecessary; with so much depending on

him he had no right to accept the risk ; he should be informed of every movement where he was. Cope, in a paroxysm of anger, shouted for him to be silent.

" You, too, mock my infirmity ! " he cried tremulously. " Nay !—that's all past, d'ye hear ? That's past months ago ; this is *my* hour of mocking. What d'ye think I've endured, smiling and bowing and soft, waiting for this day ? I'm going up yonder to laugh now, d'ye hear me ?—to laugh in my turn ! I'm going to click triggers instead o' clogs, hear you ?—to make 'em march to their own tune of Johnny Cope, mark well ! If I'd but a trumpeter to play it ! Raikes I hold in my finger, Moon's locked inside his own doors, and a dozen I've marked over yonder shall be in this square in a quarter of a day from now ; remains the big man. . . . Their furnaces ? I'll make their furnaces such a place o' dread with swinging bodies. . . . " He became inarticulate, and soon, suddenly dropping his voice a little, he cried, " Up ! Why are we talking here ? Up ! "

On the fourteenth day of August, of the year 1779, at half-past three in the afternoon, they hoisted and pushed and carried Jeremy Cope up Wadsworth Scout to where the horses waited on the Causeway.

CHAPTER XIV.

ONE WAY IN, NONE OUT.

THE Causeway, creeping round the foot of the High Moor three miles into Back o' th' Mooin, takes a long and gradual rise over the lift of the plateau that is called Holdsworth Head. The leagues of purple heather, that the weeks of continued heat had parched to a pale lilac hue, give place at this point to scarred and broken ground. Gorse and yellow bents spread north up the High Moor, and to the south, close to the road, lie the old coal workings. The bellpits, conical cavities ten or twelve feet deep, choked with ling and bracken, are scattered among innumerable hillocks of grey shale. That afternoon, over the hillocks farthest from the Causeway, where the heather began again, signs of recent disturbance were visible. The ground was newly turned, and a triangular peak of shaft-timbers showed. The older shale-heaps reflected the hot sunlight in a pale and greasy grey.

The scarlet chain wound slowly over the distant edge, approached the foot of the long rise, and halted. Its turbulent black following pushed out

a wing on either hand. Two small figures, the one on a brown horse and the other on one so white that it showed as definitely as if it had been cut out of paper, seemed to be engaged in an altercation. The former dismounted; the dispute appeared to be about changing horses. The other made a furious gesture, and the first mounted his own horse again. A strong party detached itself and advanced up the road, its bayonets fixed and glittering in the sun like tiny sparks.

A black-topped stone post marked the beginning of the workings, and at this post the advance party halted again. The officer in charge held a drawn sword; the sword flashed and pointed, and the party broke up into disorder. The scarlet coats scattered and began to appear and disappear and reappear among the shale-heaps of the bellpits; the place was perfect for an ambuscade. The black wings of the following away down the road extended farther out, but did not advance.

It took twenty minutes to beat the workings as far as the distant shaft-timbers. At the end of that time the party reassembled in the road. The scrubby gorse at the foot of the High Moor was three hundred yards away; it was not searched. One or two stragglers had now detached themselves from the black wings, and their heads and shoulders bobbed and disappeared in the heather.

Cope sat insecurely on the white horse. He had brought the stirrup-irons over the saddle, where

he held them one on either side with his hands. His legs barely reached the saddle-flaps. He neither spoke to nor looked at the officer on the brown horse, and his head was thrust forward between his narrow shoulders and his lids fluttered with a little regular movement. The officer in charge of the advance party returned and saluted his superior.

"All clear, sir," he said.

"Station your men to keep it so," Captain Ritchie replied.

He, too, seemed to be in an ill humour. He gave the word to advance. Cope managed his stirrups in a manner that suggested he had made use of the contrivance before, and he had thrust a pistol between the buttons of his waistcoat. The soldiers set forward deeper into Back o' th' Mooin.

Down in the bottom of a bellpit the bracken stirred. A hand emerged from it, and a grey cap; and Mish Murgatroyd's right arm was thrust over the baulk that crossed the old shaft. He clambered to the baulk, and looked to see that the bracken closed of itself behind him. Then he flung down the end of the rope that he had retained. He crawled on his hands and knees half way up the sloping mouth, and from under the thick bracken he drew two guns. He set the flints at half-cock, and drew back the pins of the priming pans. Then, a gun in either hand, he issued stooping from the bellpit, and began to move with little crouching

runs among the slack-heaps. Round one heap he peered cautiously; he could see the road not forty yards away. Then swiftly he crossed the narrow gully and disposed himself along the shale of a mound a little farther on. Cautiously he hoisted his cap on a gun-muzzle above the hillock, as if for a signal to somebody up the High Moor. The calf-licks on either side of his bull's-front of hair started constantly into little glistening points of sweat. He set the guns at full cock. The head of the advancing company reached the black-topped guide-stone.

At the guide-stone the captain again questioned his subordinate. As he spoke, from a gorse bush away up the High Moor there came a puff of smoke, and with the report a score of grouse rose with cries and a commotion of wings. "Half-company fire and advance," the captain commanded, and the volley rattled and the men ran forward at the double. Nothing stirred over among the gorse.

Perhaps half a minute had elapsed, when there came another flash and crack, this time from the heather ahead of the coal workings. A figure was seen to fling away a gun and to plunge and stumble away towards a fold of the moor. Another volley rang out, and the soldiers who sprang forward reloaded and fired again as they ran.

Cope's horse was stamping, and Cope kept his seat with difficulty. "On!" he cried; "do I make a worse target sitting still here? On!

There's plenty of that sort to come yet, and by the good God in Heaven . . . "

He uttered a frightful blasphemy. "On!" he screamed, and his horse leaped forward beneath him.

From close at hand there came a third shot, the bullet of which tore the neck-cloth under his chin. He drew sharply back, and his head turned swiftly. His right hand dropped the stirrup and snatched at his pistol, and "Ah, Mish!" he cried, as a head showed thirty yards away. He fired at the head, but the reports of the pistol and Mish's second gun sounded one, and with a sob and cough Cope tumbled like a half-filled sack from the white horse, and lay on the Causeway, the pistol still smoking in his hand.

"You can't miss *that* man! After him, all!" shouted the captain; and then he descended from his horse. He bent over the supervisor.

Cope had got it through both lungs, and his lips were a streaming of red that frothed and bubbled. The men of Horwick and Wadsworth and Back o' th' Mooin pressed about him and looked down on him without lifting a hand to help. "I'd ha' looked to see it black, but it's red right eniff," one of them remarked. Again the captain bent over the man who was suffocating in his own blood; then he began to give orders.

A man stripped his scarlet coat off, and it was buttoned about two muskets to make a litter. The

litter was of no great dimensions, but big enough for its purpose, and they placed Cope carefully on it. The captain told off bearers and an escort. "He refused before, but he's little choice but to go back now," he said.

They lifted him. "Take him to the inn; out of step, so as not to shake him. I'll follow later. . . . 'Mish,' did he say?"

A dozen men set off with Cope to Wadsworth, and the Wadsworth men followed, whispering among themselves.

On a shale heap they found the two guns; all their searching did not produce the man who had fired them. A strong guard was left on the spot, and that afternoon the main body advanced as far as Noon Nick without further molestation. Thence they retired half a mile, placing sentries at intervals along the ledge over the rocky bottom and men at various points along the Causeway; and a camp was pitched almost within a stone's throw of the place that the coining plant had occupied previously to its removal to Brotherton Slack.

* * * * *

The Wadsworth men who had preceded Cope reached the top of the Scout; there they assembled and held a discussion.

"Whose house is he to be ta'en to?" some asked.

"Not mine," others replied.—"No, nor mine."—"Nor mine."

"What about th' parson's?"

"Ay, that'll be it. We'll send 'em to th' parson's."

The litter came up. They would not have this abhorred flesh cross their own thresholds, but the parson did not matter so much. They looked remorselessly on him in his agony, and then told the bearers where he must be taken.

"Well, a parson'll be what he needs the most," one of the soldiers replied.

The empty sleeves of the red coat on which Cope lay (it was buttoned about the muskets exactly as Cole the clogger had been wont to button his own jacket over his arms) were tied about his legs to steady him as much as possible for the precipitous descent; then they dropped down an abrupt sheep-track.

From the window of his dining-room, which, of his four ground-floor rooms, was diagonally opposite the little back study, the parson saw the approach of the party. It did not need the glimpse he had between two of the red coats to inform him of what had happened. He fell on his knees to intercede for the unhappy shedders of blood, and he was in that posture when a rat-tat sounded at his own door. He sprang to his feet and passed out to answer the knock.

A trooper informed him briefly that there was nowhere else to take the moribund man. "He's got it," he said.

The parson gave a glance at the stretcher. "Bring him into my dining-room," he said.

He preceded them, got a rug and a blanket, and, litter and all, they laid Cope on a couch.

His breathing was horrible. The parson knew a little of medicine; he unbuttoned Cope's coat and waistcoat.

"You'll find a pair of scissors in the top drawer of that cabinet," he said to one of the soldiers; and with the scissors he cut Cope's shirt across the breast. Even the soldiers turned away, and the parson closed the shirt again.

"I presume none here are relations or near friends?" he said quietly. "Then be so good as to leave him with me."

He stepped to the door and held it open. They filed out. He crossed the room again; there was a clash of rings on the cornice-pole as he flung the heavy curtains together; and the room became suddenly dark.

Cope was conscious, but past speech, and the bubbling of his breathing filled the apartment. He made no sign when the parson asked him whether he should pray for him, and the parson would have set the dying man's hands together; but one of them still held the discharged pistol, and the fingers tightened on it mechanically when he tried to remove it. The parson knelt to perform the office for those who, in their extremity, are unable to receive the Sacrament, and his broken murmuring

and the other's choking mingled in the darkened room. They continued thus for some minutes.

Suddenly, as he prayed, the parson felt the dying man move on the couch, and the anguished battle for breath rose more violently. Opening his eyes, he saw Cope's gaze fixed on something at the farther end of the room. He turned. He had not heard the door open, but just within it stood Arthur Monjoy, his head bowed to the parson's praying.

Monjoy did not look up at the cessation of the praying, but the man on the couch made an agonising movement. He tortured himself to set himself on his left elbow, raised the pistol in his right hand, and thrice pulled vainly at the trigger, the hammer of which had already descended. For a hideous moment the pistol remained levelled, and the man's strangling and hæmorrhage mounted high; then there was a ghastly convulsion, and arm and pistol fell. Even Cope's last look seemed an impious bargain, as if he offered to pawn his soul so his ghost might but be permitted to return and finish that which his body left unaccomplished; and then he fell back. A sudden quiet invaded the darkened room. The parson crossed to the door and gently pushed Monjoy out; then he opened his front door and informed the waiting soldiers.

Nor had he, even then, finished with death for that day. Before the sun had set a message came for him from Horwick. He left in haste to visit Sally Northrop.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CAVE IN SOYLAND.

DAY was breaking when the parson returned from Horwick. As he passed beneath the wrought-iron arch of his gate he looked wearily at his own drawn curtains, and thought of the two charges under his roof. But the living must come before the dead, and he had opened his door and was passing to his study when he all but fell over the legs of a sentry who slept on a chair in the passage. He had forgotten that the man was there. The sentry started up, still half asleep, and grunted apologies.

"Has your captain returned?" the parson asked.

He was sleeping at the inn, the man replied. Nothing had happened during the night, he added, except that he had thought he heard movements in the house.

"You were mistaken. I live alone, and have been to Horwick," the parson replied, and passed to his study.

He entered it with his finger on his lips. Monjoy, who was sitting awake in a chair, nodded, and the parson drew a chair close to him and spoke in a low whisper.

"You are to join your wife two days from now," he said; and Monjoy needed no further informing that Sally had passed away—for victim had followed hunter within a very few hours.

"The man outside thinks he heard you," the parson continued by and by.

Monjoy frowned. "Then that drags you into the business," he muttered.

"Yes, I'm in it," the parson sighed, passing his hand over his harassed brow.—"When your wife joins you, she will bring her friend's child."

Monjoy frowned again. "Oh, why couldn't she meet me somewhere over the Edge!" he murmured.

"The district is almost enclosed by soldiers by this."

"Ah! . . . Then together will be safer than singly, with one a woman and certain to be watched. The child!——"

"Another thing: I was to tell you they'd found Ellah."

"I didn't know they'd lost him."

"Ah, of course not. . . ."

And though the parson whispered no more than a word or two, the finish of Eastwood Ellah had best be related here. They say that doctors have

a name for that disease of the mind of his, that shunning of light and air and space and creeping into holes. Narrower than the niche in the kitchen of the "Cross Pipes," or than the chimney of the "Fullers' Arms," was the space in which, the day before, at eight in the evening, they had found him. He had not left Sally Northrop's inn. An old well, covered with loose boards, lay in one corner of the cellar in which the ale-casks were kept; maybe Ellah had seen this well in times past; at what hour of the day or night he had sought it none knew. It had occurred to somebody to search there, and, lowering a lantern by a string, they had seen his feet.

Monjoy sighed, and then roused himself a little.

"Now one word," he said. "I may have compromised you to-night. It's up-kedge-and-cut now, for they're wanting three or four of us; so if you wish to be rid of me, I'll thank you for what you've done and take my chance."

"God knows I do, and I don't!" the parson groaned. "Hush! . . . I'll leave you now; I need rest. I'll lock you in—I'll lock £200 in—that's your figure on a handbill I've seen——"

He passed heavily out. The sentry was nodding again in the chair.

That morning Cope was taken to his own house at the top of the croft in Horwick.

The captain, Captain Ritchie, was in sole command now. Certain scrupulous limitations inherent

in the man, of which his acceptance of the parson's word had been one, made him a less useful instrument than the late Jeremy Cope had been ; but these apart, he did his work thoroughly. The district was immense, but as far as possible he encircled it. The Edge into Lancashire, ten miles away, was a sentry-beat, sentry meeting sentry every furlong. The Causeway was picketed three men to the mile, passing and returning ; guards were changed four times a day ; and on every Shelf and Scout and Ridge throughout Back o' th' Mooin men were posted as if for war. It took two days to enclose the country for beating ; and the midday of the second day was the time appointed for the funeral of Sally Northrop, which was to take place in Wadsworth.

Only a dozen folk saw Sally laid to rest ; among them were Cicely and Dooina Benn. All the morning the bell tolled in the squat belfry that had baffled Pim o' Cuddy's pigeon, and at midday the parson came out of his house. All was over in an hour. There was no "arvill," or funeral drinking ; and those who had followed the bier set off back immediately for Horwick. Cicely and Dooina, both in their blacks, carried little Jimmy between them, and at a turn at the foot of the street, where for a moment the rest could not see them, Dooina kissed Cicely quickly and wiped her eyes.

"So it won't be me 'at does for ye, love," she sobbed, and she carried Jimmy yet a little further.

The road turned to pass down round Wadsworth Shelf, and again the two women dropped behind. In a few minutes Dooina rejoined the little party alone ; and when a lad asked after Cicely, she sobbed and laughed and choked all at once, and answered him that he'd know more o' women and life th' longer he lived. They dropped to the Horwick valley.

Cicely had left the road at the mouth of a narrow grassy gully that turned behind a fold of the hill to a small dean half a mile away. Far away a glimpse of the distant Holdsworth moors and rocky Soyland showed. Cicely had known the dean from her infancy ; there was a hollow cavity in the sandy bank of a beck, overgrown with scrubby alder, that long ago had been her playing-hole, and it was there that she was to wait for Arthur. If possible, too, she was to sleep, for they would have to foot it during the night.

In twenty minutes she was ascending the bleached stones of the dry bed of the stream, stepping carefully so as to make as little noise as possible ; and then she found the alder, drew it aside, and crept into her retreat. She unburdened herself of a basket and a jar of milk, and stretched herself on the sand, Jimmy asleep in her arms.

The curtains of the parson's house had been flung back again, and the sentry had disappeared from the passage. The parson and Monjoy could now

talk freely. As much as a merry word had passed between them, for a year of Back o' th' Moooin had set the parson longing for the conversation of his own kind ; and then his brow had become clouded again. He had taken to this great red bear of a guest of his, as he had taken immediately to Cicely ; but that did not excuse his lapse from rectitude ; and, moreover, it appalled him to find that he was, for the time being, at any rate, no longer capable of prayer. He envied the beguiled captain his peace of mind. He sighed ; but he was too fully occupied just then for remorse to stay long. His bad hour was yet to come.

" Monjoy," he said suddenly, on the afternoon of Sally's funeral, " you owe me something."

" I haven't forgotten it yet," Monjoy replied.

" You owe it to me to let me do now what I refrained from before—to improve the occasion."

" I'd like to repay you in a better sort than that," Monjoy replied.

" Ah, you can't ; and even that will not clear me of my fault. You see how reluctant I am to speak—this cloth of ours is more often than not a disadvantage, for none but professional words are expected from it——"

" Go ahead," said Monjoy.

" Very well.—Leave it alone after this, my good fellow."

Monjoy made a little brusque gesture with his hand.

"Oh, that's all settled," he replied. "That was settled before—but humph! Perhaps not; I'm hanged if I know!" A whimsical smile crossed his face. "I was going to say—I should have liked to be able to say—that that was all settled before the smash-up began; but frankly, I don't know. . . . Give me the benefit of the doubt of it."

"And after this, what are your plans?"

"Why, if (thanks to you) I am able to get through to Liverpool—the sea. Boston, perhaps—anywhere. If you mean my livelihood, well, I'm a good engraver. . . . I see you don't want to exact a promise from me; let me offer it myself. Here and now, I promise you all—all you are thinking. Will you take that as my part of a Jesuitical sort of bargain?"

They shook hands for the first time.

"Have you any money?" the parson asked, by and by.

Monjoy shrugged his shoulders. "I've two furnaces over the Slack; not a stiver besides."

"Will you let me lend you a little?"

"Hm!—I might even have asked it. But let's get something to eat first. I'm hungry."

At ten o'clock that night they shook hands again, and with a God-speed, the delinquent parson closed his kitchen door behind Arthur Monjoy. Before eleven, by dark hillsides and pasture-paths, that none would have seen who had not known

them, Monjoy had come to the dry stream bed. He found the alder ; his name was called softly, and, entering, he folded Cicely in his arms.

In ten minutes they bestirred themselves.

"It's up and away now for our wedding-trip," he said. "We must be in Soyland by dawn. I know a place there. Are you well shod ? Milk and bread we have ; give them to me, and give me Jimmy. Now, Jimmy, my man.—Kiss me again, dear."

And so, with their kiss, begins the story of their flight.

Could they have gone direct, they were but ten miles from Trawden Edge. The Causeway, three miles to the north of them, and running away like the side of a triangle, crossed the high undulating plateau that was formed by the joining of a dozen Shelves and Ridges ; their own course lay up and over each Ridge as they came to it. They began to breast the first Ridge, that that shuts in the hamlet of Holdsworth, at half-past eleven of a hot and moonless night, with Arcturus peeping over a distant crest for their guide.

They struck knee-deep heather in twenty minutes, and their progress was a plunging and floundering through it. It snapped and crackled loudly. "Kilt yourself up as much as you can, dear ; there's none to see," Monjoy muttered ; but her gathering up of her skirts made little difference, and in the absence of moon the winding tracks

between the thickest of it could not be seen. They flushed a covey of birds, that rose with harsh cries, and Monjoy, with the provisions on his back and Jimmy sleeping on his arm, went a little ahead, seeking such choice of tracks as he could. Cicely's hair made a dim and ghostly shape in the darkness.

The ascent grew steep, and Monjoy assisted Cicely constantly. She began to breathe short; and ever as they toiled upwards the sharp snapping of the dry heather accompanied them. They gained the top of the Ridge, crossed it, descended again, and set forth up the next. In an hour they were across the Holdsworth valley, nearing the second top. They had not seen a sentry.

They raised another slope of the hill, and a dimness less black showed, a shorn crest of grey bents among the heather. "Courage—it will be easier there," Monjoy murmured in Cicely's ear; and they crossed a hollow slack of heather that lay between them and the short grass. Over the far-away moor to the north the Polestar had lifted, and the tail of the Plough, and Monjoy passed his arm about Cicely and helped her to the bents.

A dozen yards within the patch he seized her shoulder and drew her sharply back into the heather again. A voice fifty yards away had challenged them, and they had heard the cocking of a musket. They dropped flat into the heather, and Jimmy gave a little whimper. Again the voice challenged,

nearer ; and then fortune came to their aid. A ewe, with a couple of lambs, lifted up her woody voice in the night and scampered past them down the slope they had ascended. They saw the dark form of the sentry turn after the ewe and disappear.

"What clothes have you got on, Cicely?" Monjoy whispered.

"My blacks—for Sally," she whispered back.

"Ah! You showed like a shadow-shape on the bents. The moon will be up soon ; it must be the heather again, lass. Bear up ; the next Ridge is the beginning of Soyland. Put your arm in mine, and stoop."

They skirted the patch of bents stooping. As they began the next descent they heard voices behind them and a soft laugh ; there were two sentries. They took to the heather again.

At three o'clock the moon rose, a great half-round over the dark hillside. Cut out against her disc, a quarter of a mile away, a third sentry showed ; but the light revealed a little more clearly the divisions of the tortuous heather bushes, and they went with less noise and more quickly. There did not seem to be sentries in the bottoms, and they were unchallenged as they crossed the lower slopes of Soyland. They began the ascent of Soyland.

By half-past four o'clock they were five hundred feet up the rocky hill, a thousand above the sea, among enormous grey boulders that studded the

heather. Cliffs rose towering above them like an eaves. Bidding Cicely remain at the foot of a narrow rocky gorge, Monjoy started away under these eaves. Presently he returned. Two score yards farther on he pulled aside a great mass of heather ; behind the heather was a crack scarce a foot high.

"Let me go in first ; take Jimmy," he said ; and he forced himself through the crack, and presently received Cicely in his arms. The cavern was black as pitch, but it had a floor of dry sand. Cicely, exhausted, stretched herself upon it with Jimmy at her bosom, and Monjoy lifted her head and pilowed it on his breast.

It was ten o'clock and a brilliant morning when they awoke. Monjoy stepped at once up the sandy slope and put aside the screen of heather from the opening. Across the valley, against the sky, four red dots moved ; and the like, he knew, would be moving on the hill over their heads. But he was on his own ground in Soyland. There was not a nook nor corner of it that he had not rummaged for ore, and of the very cavern in which they were he had one day thought jestingly how carefully Matthew Moon would have taken its bearings against an unforeseen hour when he might have need of it. He could venture out, too, as, indeed, he must, no less for information than for milk for the infant and sustenance for themselves. The cave was of rock ; it glowed with a soft and pleasant morning light ;

but it was not more than a dozen yards deep, and led nowhere.

Cicely had spread bread in her lap and opened the jar of milk, and they breakfasted cheek against cheek, Cicely rising once to still Jimmy's crowing as he rolled and tumbled on the sandy floor. After breakfast Arthur kissed Cicely, a smacking, business-like buss on the mouth, spied for a while through the opening, and went out.

It was two o'clock when he returned, and gave Cicely such news as he had. The furnaces were only a couple of miles away ; there was a camp there, and Soyland was picketed. But the soldiers could not keep the Holdsworth and Brotherton men from their own hills, and from behind a rock he had seen one or two by whom he did not especially want to be seen. On the Ridge to the westward of them, too, red spots were marching and counter-marching ; but they were busiest behind them and to the north-east, Wadsworth way. "I'll go out later in the afternoon," he said. "I may run across a man I may speak to, for all the £200, Did you know your husband was worth £200, love ?"

At four o'clock he went out again. It was past seven when he returned, and something in his cheerfulness seemed to alarm Cicely.

"Tell me what's the matter, dear," she asked gently.

"What matter, Cis ?"

"You're putting it on, your lightness. What have you seen or heard?"

"Nothing I didn't know before, dear. I saw little Crutchie of Fluett, and he's bringing us food to-night. It seems £200 tempts some of them; but that's no news."

She pressed closer to him. "It would be kinder to tell me, dear; there's no secrecy between us now, not like before."

He was silent for a long time.

"Very well," he said at last. "They're flag-flapping. They began flag-flapping on Wadsworth Shelf when you turned off into the dean. They've seen you, or, maybe, both of us. It couldn't be helped, for they'd have missed you in any case. Never mind."

It did not take her an instant to come to her decision. She sat up, suddenly very pale.

"Arthur, you must leave me," she said. "They can do nothing to me, and I'll meet you somewhere in a week or two—a month or two—oh, Arthur!"

"What's that?" he said, with infinite gentleness. "No, dear. It would be just the same in a week or a month; they'd follow you. We'll take our wedding-trip together, I think; won't we, Jim?—No, darling; I decide this. It's three quarters through to get to Soyland; another hill, then the Edge, and down into Ratchet, and over Chat Moss to Liverpool . . . now say 'Yes'—say it at once——"

She made a lovely little murmuring against his shoulder, and he laughed.

"That's my lass. Now let's talk.—I like your parson, Cis. Why, you've never asked me how I got along with him yet!"

At ten o'clock he went out again, and met Crutchie of Fluett at the appointed place. He was back by eleven.

"Is it time to push on?" she asked.

"No, dear," he replied quietly; "I've brought food for another day here."

"Oh!" she cried, tortured with apprehension; "what is it?"

"Ssh! It makes no difference. I know ways they wouldn't find in a year. It's ten to one they're mostly town men. Come and lie down, and trust your husband. Come"

It was long before she had sobbed herself to sleep in his arms, and he, his own brain busily working, heard her murmuring in her sleep from time to time through the night.

They awoke at seven o'clock, and he passed to the opening. As it had happened, seven o'clock was not a minute too early for them to have awakened. A fresh morning breeze stirred, and the ridge they had passed showed through a sunny haze, shot with gold and grey and tender purple. Down the hillside moved slowly a party of redcoats, and, their heads visible from time to time and again hidden in the heather, four dogs tugged at their leashes.

"Why don't the fools loose 'em?" Monjoy muttered grimly. "Ay, they're town-bred.—Come, Cis, we'll not stay for breakfast."

He patted his pockets as if to make sure of something, and then looked to the priming of a pair of pistols that Cicely did not know he carried.

CHAPTER XVI.

COVER.

"Cis," he said, anxiously, his hand at the screen of heather that closed the mouth of their retreat, "you've got to get over Soyland alone, and unseen. I'm going to show you a crack that will take you nearly to the top. Except at the very top, there are stones enough and heather enough to cover you, but you may have to creep. You'll have to watch both behind and ahead, for you mustn't be seen and you mustn't walk into the arms of a sentry. They're a good quarter of a mile apart—they can't cover a hundred miles of country—you can get through easily. I'm going south a little way: listen where you're to wait for me. You'll cross Soyland, sighting by a large cairn you'll see on Brotherton Head. Under it, among the heather, there's an old square stone shaft and some birches. I'll be there in an hour. I'll take Jimmy with me. —Now repeat that after me."

He could scarce hear her faint reply, and he shook her gently.

"Come now ; I know you can be a brave and clever girl. I'll tell you again. . . ."

She repeated the instructions after him, and then he said, "Quick, a kiss . . . now out you go !" He helped her through the opening and saw her immediately and swiftly take the shelter of a large boulder.

"Yes, that's the way," he said approvingly ; "yonder's the foot of the nick. Go quickly up it—take the risk—and then forward. Now. . ."

He dropped on his knees, marked the position of the bloodhounds across the valley, noted their pace, and was off.

He had packed Jimmy in the breast of his coat and secured him with the strap from which the provisions had been slung. His way lay south, round the precipitous eaves of Soyland towards the falling moorland below. He moistened his finger to the fresh wind, dodged again to a spot whence he could see the bloodhounds, glanced at the rocks above him, and began to move from rock to rock, making all the cover he might. Now and then he murmured to Jimmy, who was restless with the shaking and close confinement. "Be a man, Jimmy," he kept saying ; "across to this big boulder now—now over this heather—we must keep an eye above us, too—good ! We'll double here ; never do to cross that open space, eh, Jimmy ? . . ." He made fair progress, and presently gave an "Ah !" of satisfaction. A

path of slippery bents ran up from below among the rocks and heather, as a wave washes up a steep beach ; unhesitatingly he crouched and crawled towards it.

" Now hold tight for a slide, Jimmy ! " he muttered.

He lay flat on his back and started himself down the slippery way. His speed increased, and he clutched at heather roots to check himself, using his heel also as a brake. That was dangerous, for it lifted his whole body. The heather rocked and swept past him in a blur ; he plunged dizzily downwards, jolted and breathless ; and sixty yards down he clutched desperately at another bush and lifted twice clear over, his body taking a heather bush at each bound. He lay in a deep gutter between two purple clumps, scratched and bruised and panting, his body arched over the child ; then he was up again. His first glance was at the rocky eaves ; their line was sharp against the sky and unoccupied ; and between himself and the men with the hounds he had now set a low roll of moorland.

It was now he who must take a risk—the risk of a sentry appearing suddenly on the eaves. He ran twenty yards ahead, glanced up again at the grey rocks, ran forward again, and continued to run, his head constantly over his shoulder. Jimmy's face puckered, and again Monjoy hushed him.

" Ssh ! Jimmy boy ; we'll manage yet, you and

I; the farther south the less chance they have of rounding us—but not too far, Jimmy, or we shan't catch those damned dogs. What fools they are to keep 'em leashed, Jimmy! They're lazy rascals. . . . Now just a little farther——”

The child became quiet again, and by and by a further fall of the land gave them a moment's breathing-space.

He was now far down in the valley, with nothing but the rolling heather about him. “Do you think this'll do?” he said to the child; and again he moistened his finger to the wind. He drew out a pistol. He found a flat stone, knocked the priming from the pan, and began to work up a little tinder and tow with more powder from his flask. He set the stone down under the heather and drew the trigger over it.

He had to draw thrice before the spark of flint and standard ignited the charge on the stone; then it caught, and he drew the heather close over it. A bright little flame licked and crackled; it spread; and a thin smoke and the pungent smell of burning heather arose. Monjoy tore up a smaller bush and held it for a moment in the blaze.

“Now we begin, Jimmy,” he said. “This is very bad for the birds, and you're not to do it when you get older, remember; but once in a while ——”

A few yards on he fired another bush. After the weeks of drought a spark sufficed; and he

advanced at a quick walk trailing his brand. When it burnt out he took another. Already from the first point of firing, the flames, of an orange scarce visible, were advancing up the hillside before the light breeze. "Variable ; but there'll be more wind higher up," he assured Jimmy ; "whew, but it's dry ! Too dry ; we want some damp to make a smoke—a nice dense smoke to hide us. What, Jim ?—There, I think that'll do."

He flung his brand from him and turned north again and a little west.

Cicely had mounted the rocky cleft in pitiful trepidation. "Brave and clever," she told herself she must be ; she repeated the words over and over, but they did not stop the painful thumping of her heart. This increased as she neared the head of the ravine, and she felt that a crisis of nerves was seizing her. It came, and she sank in a huddle under a rock, stifling hysterical sobs in a fold of her skirt. She could see the open space at the top of the ravine ; she dared not approach it. For nearly twenty minutes she lay, her sobs gradually subsiding, but her will gone from her ; and then there chanced something that brought her round like vinegar. A stone's-toss away she saw appear the red back of a soldier.

What kind of being her fears had raised for her she did not know ; what she saw was a rather undersized man with sloping shoulders and a

handkerchief tucked into the back of his neck. He was eating bread and cheese, and walking aimlessly a little way and back again. He half turned his face—a red, foolish, timid face—but it was the bread and cheese that steadied Cicely completely. If there was only an eater of bread and cheese to elude she thought she could do it, and she waited, no longer trembling. Even then she noticed, but was not aware that she noticed, a light odour of burning; and soon she saw the soldier stroll away to the left, or north. He did not reappear; she advanced cautiously and looked round the boulder at the head of the ravine; he was forty yards away, still walking. The bare top before her was no wider than Horwick market-place; she could run it or creep . . . she crept, having control of herself again. With a little wary run she was across and crouching behind another rock. A little way before her Soyland seemed to end where the top of a mountain-ash showed over an edge, and on the purple sunlit hill across the next valley she could see the grey cairn against the sky. As she dropped over the rocky verge there came again the smell of burning ling, but again she was hardly aware of it. The wide basin beneath her was a sea of blooming heather, and almost lost in it was the small cluster of birches and the stone shaft where she was to wait for Arthur. She began the most difficult task of all—the descent with her back to the rocky, sentinelled skyline.

Suddenly, as if some obstruction had fallen from her senses, she identified the half-noticed, familiar smell, and in a flash it came to her what Arthur was about. A light vapour crept up the valley below her. A cliff of rock blocked her view to the south ; she hastened towards it and looked beyond. As she did so she heard a soft, deep, distant bay.

No flame was visible ; a long, low, rolling line of grey smoke hid all beyond it. It was advancing the whole width of Soyland and more, and its under surface seemed to drag in the heather like shreds and wisps of grey wool. Listening, she could hear the subdued low roaring and hissing ; and then a wandering breeze made for a moment a breach in the dense grey roll. It showed a glimpse of ragged, orange, murky flame, that was blotted out again ; and then, as the smoke took the lower slopes, the sky became veiled, the day began to fall to a filthy brownish twilight, and the sun dipped to a dull and bloody red. From behind her, over Soyland, the roaring sounded more loudly.

Cicely knew enough of burning moorland to be aware that, once you were caught in that smoke, the flame was like to appear suddenly, leaping all about you. Already the pungent smell filled her nostrils and lungs, and all at once, somewhere behind her, a gun was discharged. As if it had been a signal to herself, she sprang forward down the hillside.

The shaft among the birches was clearly visible, but the grey smoke was creeping towards it, and here and there, in advance of the general line, detached puffs smouldered, like sheep-fleece caught in briars. The smoke from these points veered with the variable wind, and a minute's longer delay might cut her off. She took no thought for cover now. A sheep-track threaded the heather, leading far to the north of the cairn; its direction was of less consequence than the chance of being lost in blinding, stifling smoke with flame behind it; and she sped down the sheep-track, away from the fire and across its path. As she did so she muttered, as folk repeat before going to sleep something they desire to wake up with in the morning, "Keep out o' the smoke—keep out o' the smoke——"

Very soon the birches became shrouded, then blotted out.

When flame comes along damp heather, the bushes in advance pour out a thick white smoke and then burst into flame of themselves; with dry, the flames run forward yards at a time, with outriders of flying sparks. Both dry and damp were there, for even the long drought had not dried up the hidden rills and heavy marshy patches. Among the grey there rose from these compact white spiral columns that twisted and rolled, terrifying in the enveloping twilight. She could hear the clamour of the birds, and even then there came to

her a thankfulness that the nesting was long past, and that all were on the wing. A score of bleating sheep rushed past her ; the light penetrating mist began to enwrap her ; and she turned to the north again, looking ever for the westernmost point at which the moor burned.

She saw it, or thought she did, when she was half-way across the hollow. Still she kept away from it ; and then, for the first time, she glanced behind her. Above her head the sky still showed, its blue only partially embrowned ; but the rocky hill she had descended was completely obliterated, and through the dreadful curtain that hid it there glared dull copper-coloured tracts. Swiftly she looked north ; scarlet knots and clusters of soldiers had gathered on the heights ; she forgot that they stuffed handkerchiefs into their necks and ate bread and cheese ; she turned hurriedly southward again. The cairn on the hill crest above the shaft and the birches was now far to her left instead of in front of her ; the course that, but for her delay, would have led straight towards it was a mile-long pall of smoke.

Suddenly a panic took her. A high ceaseless crackling now filled the valley, and behind it was an ominous roar. She turned again, almost direct for the cairn ; the smoke was now shrouding it. She had seen the redcoats on the heights moving round as if to cut her off, and her one thought was to make for the birches where Arthur would be—

they could not be very far away. She fancied that the smoke had changed a little in direction, too, and was falling more behind her. She coughed and choked as she tore forwards towards the point that she had judged to be the limit of the fire.

In a few minutes the smoke had filled her throat and she had fled choking before it. It advanced almost as quickly as she, but she found easier breathing, and by and by came slanting towards it again. Again she retreated, baffled and half-blinded. The heat was all about her, and she tore at the band of her skirt. She pulled the skirt off and wound it about her head. This darkness of her own making seemed all at once to terrify her, and, with muffled shouts of "Arthur! Arthur!" she plunged forward. She fell back again. She advanced again, and again had to fall back.

She now knew not in what direction she was going, save that it was away from the brown, murky night that was engulfing her and towards the remnant of livid day that, through a fold of her wrapping, still showed ahead. Not forty yards from her was a glare as of red copper. It broke into a frightful bright flame, and was smothered again; and its roaring filled her ears. That glimpse of hell appalled her; she gave a shriek and fled from it in a straight line, as the sheep and birds had fled.

Then from behind the dark curtain of smoke there came suddenly a shriller noise and a succession of

loud cracks, an indescribable mingling. A bright and lurid light towered high over her, and yellow flame twisted upwards shrieking. Something—she knew not what—so different was happening there that all at once an intelligence broke on her—she was close to the birches, which were ablaze. Arthur would be there—would be there, as he had promised—though her own courage had failed Arthur would be there waiting . . . again she began to utter piercing cries.

Through the tempest of roaring came another short crack, as if of a pistol ; smoke and fierce heat suffocated her ; and she gave one last lost cry.

An "Ahoy !" answered her. She was seized, by whom she knew not, and the skirt was pressed closer about her head. Somebody hurried her forward, lifting her from time to time completely off her feet ; and her head was so completely enveloped that she did not know that twenty yards away the breathing was easier. She was scarce conscious that her feet were taking steep rising ground ; she only knew that the heat was abated. She was borne swiftly forward ; presently her head was partly uncovered ; but there was no respite from the lifting and climbing.

Actually, it was not more than five minutes before they were well up the hillside, with the conflagration sweeping away from them below. She heard a gasping voice : "Not yet—more into the wind !" and she was helped forward until a

freshening breeze fanned her face. She was placed on a bed of heather ; she remembered afterwards that either she saw Jimmy or dreamed she did ; but Arthur was far up the hillside, firing the heather again.

She lay for a quarter of an hour before he returned ; then he flung himself beside her and broke suddenly into sobs that shook his frame.

"Oh, my darling !" he cried heart-brokenly ; "where had you been ?"

She murmured something, her own eyes closing ; and then he seized her as if even yet some horror strove to part them.

"Oh, I waited—waited—all Soyland blazed—and the wind turned and still you didn't come ; but I knew you were clever and brave, though I couldn't see you. . . . Ah ! This won't do."

He stood up and began to walk about. Presently he was calmer, and sat down again.

"That's better," he said. He took her in his arms and looked down at her grimed and swollen eyes. "Yes, I knew you were clever and brave ; and you must be clever and brave again in a few minutes, dear. The next few hours are our opportunity. . . . What do you say ?"

Gathered against his bosom, she had murmured something.

"Yes, yes ; you can have five minutes ; you shall have that if I have to fire all the ling in Lancashire. Yes, we're better now."

See, Jimmy's putting out his arms to you, Cis——"

Softly he gave her the child.

Below them, the spectacle was one of infernal magnificence. They were now in the rear of the flames that ran devouringly forward, rank on rank, with a red courier springing up wherever a spark alighted. On the level ground the flame had spread swiftly; it now reached the foot of Brotherton Head. It took the whole of the slope above it in one terrific red lick. With a short dull roar, as if of an explosion, the hill sprang into a sheet of flame. All smoke was lost in an upward spouting of fire. At three or four points of the hill, taller spouts—gorse, likely—screamed upward and passed; and then came short bents, and for a moment smoke could be seen far away, rolling over the whole of Back o' th' Mooin. To the south, for a mile and more, all was a desert of ash, white and black and grey, with patches still smouldering; and a dancing mesh of sparks and short flames and glowing embers formed the rear-guard of the advance.

"Put your skirt on and come now," said Monjoy, bending over his wife and taking her blackened hands.

In a few minutes she was ready to set forth. He took Jimmy again, and, still a little tremulous, he talked to the child as he supported Cicely up the hill.

"Forward now, Jimmy; we've a day's start of those men with the pretty red coats. Forward to the Edge now, you and I and Cicely, and then down into Ratchet, Jimmy. This is our good-bye to Back o' th' Mooin. When you're older I'll tell you a tale about Back o' th' Mooin; come, take a look at it now—you may chance to remember. . . . Look, Cis, how it's raging over yonder! That's—yes—that's at the furnaces—my furnaces—and that white steaming's Brotherton Bog. Whew! . . . This is a most sinful thing, Jimmy; the poor birds are homeless now, as we are; but our home's near Cicely, wherever she is, eh? (He is like his mother, Cis!)—Come, dear; you shall rest again at the top"

It was between afternoon and evening when, far to the south, they reached the Edge. They could not yet see the great western plain, but the land fell away steadily, and soon there was nothing but the immediate foreground and the far distance. The sun sank as they rested and walked again, and the heather and the sheep were dyed and flooded with gold. The light grew richer and quieter and more serene; vapours turned the sun to crimson; and suddenly, appearing beyond a last gradual rise, the breadth of Lancashire lay spread out below them.

Three miles away, among broken hills, lay Ratchet, one or two of its roof-windows still shining brightly. Far beyond it lay a russet patch of

smoke—the chimneys of a great town. Violet vapours crept over all the plain. They could not see the sea in the gathering twilight. The rim of the sun dipped into a bank of cloud ; it lost its light and grew rusty and died.

Faintly from Ratchet came the ringing of a bell, and Monjoy's eyes turned from the quiet vale to his wife.

"Tell me, dear—when you have kissed me—do you dread to leave and to begin with me again in a new land ?"

"No, no ; let's go quickly," she replied.

"Forward, Jimmy," Monjoy said ; and they dropped down the winding path to Ratchet.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MOON TURNED ROUND AGAIN.

OF the written records on which this tale has partly depended, neither Matthew Moon's books nor the voluminous official documents, all criss-crossed with signatures and stamps and seals and arms, make mention of the departure of Arthur Monjoy from Liverpool. After he had (according to one description) "most feloniously fired and consumed the moor," he ceased, officially, to exist. But word of mouth, that, with scarce more husks and wrappings, holds now and then as good a kernel of truth, goes a little further. To be sure, for dates and suchlike the documents are the safer authority; for while it was said by some that he sailed within a week, others had it that not until the month of October did he set foot on the deck of a merchant brig bound for Boston, the reason for the delay being the illness of his wife. But documents and tradition together make a pretty tangle, and he who would get at the truth of the matter must dip his cup at both sources. Partaking, perhaps, a

little of both was the letter that arrived for the Wadsworth parson from Boston some time in the following spring, informing him of their settling in the new-made Republic and of the birth of a little foster-sister for Jimmy Northrop.

The official records had best be taken first.

There is still extant a letter of William Chamberlayne, Solicitor to His Majesty's Mint, in which oath is made, and it is said, that he and the Solicitor for the Crown in this particular prosecution "are not prepared to proceed further in the trials of Raikes, Dean and Thomas, or any of them, at the assize now being held at the Castle of York, by reason, as he, this deponent, has been informed, of the lack of clear and certain information and the great difficulties in the coming at evidence material to the prosecution ;" and, with an extra quirk and pomposity or two, you may read the same of Matthew Moon. Moreover, certain persons were now to be brought to book on a more serious count than clipping and coining, or even the unlicensed smelting of ores (though it is difficult to see how, the penalty being the same, the distinction in guilt is drawn), and that was the murder of Jeremy Cope, Supervisor of Excise when it suited his purpose, Chief of the Bow Street Eight, and a good deal besides—an officer whose lustre was only eclipsed a quarter of a century later by that of the famous Townshend. There is yet to be seen a proclamation in the *London Gazette*, wherein His

Majesty declares himself pleased to promise his most gracious pardon to anyone (save the person who actually shot the said Mr. Cope) who shall declare his or her accomplice or accomplices therein, so that he, she, or they may be apprehended and convicted thereof—ending with an offer of a reward to be paid by the Right Honourable the Lords Commissioners of His Majesty's Treasury, and signed, "Weymouth." The reward was supplemented by a similar one on the part of "the gentlemen and merchants of the Town and Parish of Horwick, to be paid by the Constables." And for the account of how these rewards were never paid we must leave the documents for a moment, and turn to the fireside gossip of the weavers and sheepmasters in the ingles on winter nights.

From that source, and similar ones, we learn how Mish Murgatroyd lay hidden in the bellpit until after the advancing fire had roared away above his head, and the soldiers had retired before the flames. Three days in all (so the story went) he stayed there, and, effecting his escape at the end of that time, he returned to his home and followed his ordinary calling—which, to be sure, was little enough good. Maybe he did not know they were provided with his name; if he did, he showed uncommon coolness; for shortly afterwards he went to Horwick Thursday market, got rather more than market-drunk, and set off at six o'clock in the evening with (however he came by them) two heavy

budgets of cloth, one under either arm, the straps about his neck. He reached Wadsworth, and took a sheep-track up the Scout ; but near the top his foot, or the drink, or both, betrayed him. He slipped and rolled down. He did not roll any great distance, for he lodged against two mountain-ash trees, already reddening with berries. His fetching up against them was the end of Mish Murgatroyd. The heavy budgets bounded forward over an edge ; they stopped with a horrible jerk ; Mish was hanged at his own cost instead of at that of his country ; and the hangman himself could not have done the job more neatly. That was a stroke of luck for the country, for there is no sense in wasting money.

Dick o' Dean's end was, too, in its way, remarkable. Of the blood-money that had been subscribed in the loom-loft of the " Fullers' Arms," only forty-five pound odd had been actually collected, and the three lucky wolves had taken fifteen pound apiece. When he heard of the hanging of Mish, Dick o' Dean had the effrontery to go to his widow and to demand the unspent balance of Mish's fifteen pounds, averring that he had incurred certain expenses on Mish's behalf that had included a bribe to a sergeant to permit of Mish's escape from the bellpit. The tale was thin enough, but it seems to have sufficed for Mrs. Mish. By that time, however, Parker of Ford was very busy in Horwick, straightening up certain matters with Captain Ritchie ; and this exploit of Dick o' Dean's came to

his ears. (Dick had already found it an easy matter to get fifteen pounds out of the distracted Charley.) Proceedings for blackmail were promptly instituted, and Dick was laid by the heels. Blackmail or what you like, once they had him they were little likely to let him go again, and they made short work of him in York. His end was not as satisfactory as Mish's, costing more. The youth Charley was suffered to enjoy such peace as his conscience would allow him ; and the parson shrugged his shoulders, but could do little more, when, in course of time, Charley and Pim o' Cuddy became stalwart pillars of the Church.

For a matter of some significance, we have to return again to the documents. It is obvious that if you are permitted to select such documents as you require, and to ignore the rest, they may be made very serviceable things ; but you will be prudent to make away entirely with such as do not tally with the case you have thus conveniently proved. It was an odd thing that there should have come to light, years afterwards, a paper that in all decency should have been destroyed, namely, another deposition of Eastwood Ellah's. This deposition flatly contradicted the one which Cope had put with a chuckle into his pocket. Cope may or may not have seen this paper ; of its existence he must have known, from the circumstances under which it was found ; and it is always possible that orders he may have given for its destruction

THE MOON TURNED ROUND AGAIN. 237

were disregarded. The suppression of it made some difference to Northrop and Haigh, but Cope was not the first, or last, who disregarded what was inconvenient, and, each in our different way, most of us do it. As Cope himself had said, the Law's a queer thing; all's past now, and they didn't get Big Monjoy.

The parson of Wadsworth, too, had his cross to bear, and he reddened when, meeting Captain Ritchie one day in Horwick, the captain looked straight through him, ignoring his existence. Explanation was impossible; the matter must be let go at that; and for long afterwards that hot blush mounted into the parson's cheek, often at inopportune moments. So, the horse being gone, he locked the stable door to save the harness; and the vows of amends that his praying presently gave him strength to make he kept as well as, or, maybe, a trifle better than, most of us. Then one fine day it suddenly occurred to him that he was getting rather sentimentally fond of his delinquency and making quite the most of it. "Hallo," he thought, "this'll never do!" and a laugh shook him.—"A good thing too!" he declared roundly. "The fellow was a man, anyway, and his wife a treasure, and I'd do it again rather than he should be stretched!"

There was very little hope of the parson after that.

Such parts of Back o' th' Moon as had been

heather were a sad sight for long enough to come. The fire burned here and there for a fortnight, and then there came a light shower or two that set the hills a-steam with opaque white smoke. For days after the apparent extinction of the blaze, you could, by stamping your foot on the consumed patches, set sparks glowing and little flames flickering; and then all died down. It had swept clear over the Slack to the Causeway, and there its progress had only been arrested by the tearing up of stretches of heather, in which work both soldiers and Back o' th' Mooiners had joined.—But a good deal of heather has grown on the hills since then, and Back o' th' Mooin is not very different to look at. In the villages they gradually returned to the weaving of kerseys and shalloons, and some hold that the saw,

“ Three great ills come out o' the north—

A cold wind, a cunning knave, and a shrinking cloth ”

had its rise somewhere between Horwick Town and Trawden Edge.

One particular may be added, that, when all's said, is very like Back o' th' Mooin. A little grisly it is, but things are to be valued according to the store you set by them, and the atlas-bone of a king went the same way. It is this: Bit by bit, the two bodies hanging in chains on Wadsworth Shelf began to disappear by other agency than the crows and the weather. A man began it by taking a phalange, then another took a metatarsal bone.

THE MOON TURNED ROUND AGAIN. 239

Others, seeing the mementoes brought from pockets or placed on the chimney-pieces of their neighbours, followed their example ; and so it went on, just as they had bought the rope at sixpence an inch. The things were prized ; more than a few in Horwick joined in the filching ; and one November nightfall the remains were taken in a lump in a cart by a party of Back o' th' Mooiners returning from the last Thursday market of the year. For long the relics were treasured ; then they began to lie about the cottages, and to be lost sight of during a succession of dustings and cleanings. One only, a dorsal vertebra, probably the seventh or eighth, is now known to exist ; and it may be added to the documents and the fireside tradition that is testimony to the truth of this tale.

THE END.



THE PILLERS.

I.—THE NIGHTINGALE.

SINCE the first cuckoo, weeks ago, their talk had been of little but the coming of the anemones and bluebells, the pairing of the birds in hedgerow and brake and copse, and all the merry bustle of the spring of the year ; so that you might have imagined that, hale men and buxom women as well as the younger sort, the posy-verses of the last Valentine's Day had left them all poetical crazy. But a little acquaintance with the good folk and their business would have instructed you how much hung for them on the chances of air and wind and dew ; and you would then have watched as jealously as they for that half-hour's frost of an April night that will stiffen the sap of trees, and set wood and bark together past the power of any pilling-iron to part them.

Every year, as early as the middle of April or as late as the middle of May, they set forth in a band, and the whole village assembled to see them off. The two great waggons, packed the day before,

and the pole-wain on which the long ladders trailed almost to the ground, would be had out of the sheds at the town end ; and the talk and laughter of the villagers would mingle with the singing of the larks and the bleating of the lambs on the bare hillsides and all the noises of the morning. The horses would be brought out and backed into the shafts with a great clatter and stamping, and the brass discs and buckles of the harness would flash and jangle in the sun. The manes of the horses had been decked with red, blue, and white ribbons, and straw had been trimmed and plaited into their tails ; and while lads frolicked and ran in and out, the smallest of the children would be held up to tie rosettes and favours to the whips. The foremost waggon was always hung round with crocks and kettles like a tinker's caravan, and to this the three or four women who were to accompany the men would mount. Good-byes would be said, handkerchiefs waved, and a man would take the head of the leading horse. The crocks and kettles would set up a clangour ; the second waggon, that carried the saws and axes and bolting-irons, would fall in ; and the lads would run behind the long wain, swinging on the ladders that rocked up and down like a rantipole. So they would pass between the dewy hawthorn hedges, and at the turn of the road, where the wheels were clogged to drop down the hill, the village would lose sight of them for maybe three weeks or a month.

Sometimes they pilled (or "barked," as some call it) for others, being then paid by the day or contract, sometimes they bought the bark themselves to sell again to the tanners ; and when the timber was not to come down at once they left the stripped trees, naked and white and ghostly, to stand for another year that the sap might retire and the tree season as it stood. While the men worked in the woods, the women cooked and mended, plied the pilling-irons on the smaller branches, stacked the bark into light sheds, and perchance plaited osiers or wove straw basses for beehives meanwhile. Sometimes they slept in inns and farm-kitchens, and sometimes barns and sheds were prepared against their coming.

After this fashion they came, on a May afternoon, to the Ladyshaws Wood, that belongs to the township of Portsannet under the headland ; and from the height several of them saw, for the first time in their lives, the sea. The warden of Portsannet and his bailiff grow the oaks of the Ladyshaws wide and spreading, for tough, crooked pieces for the knees and ribs of ships ; and in the higher wood the columns of the pines are crowded together to make the taller masts. Two score of them, oaks and pines, had been marked to come down, and the placid bailiff, red-faced, and smoking very strong tobacco, had first taken the Pillers round the woods, and then shown them their accommodation, a small cluster of barns and a penthouse that had once been

a smithy. They made a fire that night on the disused forge-hearth ; and as they sat about it they told one another how fair and settled the air was, and how grandly the Ladyshaws were golding, and spoke of the sea and ships, and of the sea-worm that bores the oak, and of bark and tanning and markets and prices. Soft clouds lay low to the earth ; scents and odours, now from the pine woods, now from the hawthorn hedges, and again the whiff of Portsannet and the sea, drifted in tracts on the mild air ; and if now and then a man winked at his neighbour and said something about a pheasant or an egg, it was no such great matter after all. They sought their blankets early ; the retriever bitch and the two terriers stretched themselves across the thresholds of the sheds ; and the whole company slept long before moonrise.

* * * * *

High in the dark laithe the four women lay on the top of a half-cut stack ; and Jessie Wheeler had avoided the corner immediately under the great square hole that yawned in the floor of the loft overhead. Instead, she had spread her blanket near a small vent-hole that had been made by the leaving out of a wall-stone. Against this aperture she could barely distinguish the shape of her arm as the tips of her fingers touched the floor only a couple of feet above her. The women had taken off only their upper garments ; and the niche where they

lay smelt of stale hay, and the trusses crackled and whispered with each of their movements.

A short harsh call outside startled her, and she raised herself on her elbow to listen. The call was repeated ; and then there stole on the May night a series of long liquid notes. A nightingale had begun to sing in the thorn hedge. The sound ceased, and the notes seemed to take flight and diminish and die away. She waited. Again came the low liquid call, and broke into trills that increased in volume. Another long pause left the air trembling ; and then, as if by the giving way of some barrier, the full flood of song gushed like a torrent from the bird's throat. The piercing melody filled the night ; it mounted and hovered and rang under the low clouds, as if under rafters ; it spread to the woods and out over the headland ; and Jessie's heart lifted, and her lips shaped the name of Willie Ramsey.

To poets the nightingale might sing of unattainable things ; to Jessie it sang only of Willie—Willie had all. The torrent of melody filled the dark loft where she lay with memories and images only of Willie ; and she closed her eyes in bliss as the bird sang ever louder and clearer.

What the beginning had been she could hardly have told. They had sought the nuts and blackberries together, and watched the trout in the shallow brook, and popped the bags of the foxgloves. They had played and kissed and wrangled ; and he, too, with the other lads, had

twisted the stalks of the pulling-grass into her hair, and pointed at her for her outbursts of passion. . . . Perhaps her hair had been the beginning. Once the children had plaited chaplets of green leaves for their hair, and on hers Willie had set the leaves of the copper beech, and laughed that hair and leaves should be of one colour. Long after, she had set her hair in a coil above her white nape ; and when someone had again made sport of this, in place of the fit of temper had come quick tears. . . . The memories came faster as the bird sang ecstatically—of the season when their companionship had seemed, like Willie's calf-voice, all broken and here and there ; of the day when she had fashioned the straw mell-doll for the corner of the last stack, and the farm men had laughed, and jested at her "babe," and Willie had seen her miserable flush . . . and then of the evening in the milking-shed when he had so kissed her that it had seemed wonderful they could ever have kissed before as boy and girl. In spite of her passionateness, then, he had loved her. . . . From the yard came the sound of a horse's stamping, and the dragging of the chain and the munching at the crib ; she heard it even through the song. A faint light glimmered in the vent-hole—the moon had broken for a moment through the soft clouds, and the nightingale sang as though the hand of a man had seized him and were crushing the heart within him. . . .

And so they had become lovers, and had been so for well-nigh a year. The moon became clouded again; the bird's song changed to lovely aching notes, that somehow Jessie could hardly bear; and her hand stole to her breast and sought the little gold locket that contained the tiny ring of hair that Willie's mother had cut from him while yet he was scarcely bigger than the mell-doll.

* * * * *

The morning star shone over the sea, and the first cock crowed down in Portsannet. The nightingale ceased to sing. The moon still rode high among the clouds; but a breeze came from the east, and a greyness and lifting altered the air. The cocks made an increasing din. A splendour of rose and gold, in the midst of which the sun burned like a brazier, turned the vault to an ineffable blue, and flushed the tops of the Ladyshaws. And as the earliest of the Pillers to rise trudged down the meadows for water, he saw that a man-o'-war, under half canvas, stood motionless beyond the headland. He stopped to watch the men who moved about her like ants, and saw the little fleck of white as she dropped anchor.

II.—THE LADYSHAWS.

The woods resounded with the calling of the men, the hacking of the grub-axe at roots, the clash of irons flung down, and the ceaseless snapping and crackle of the undergrowth. The wide spaces that had been cleared for the fall of the oaks were trampled and trodden, mould and bluebells and the dead brown bracken ; and hazel and thorn and dark holly were speckled white as if with cuckoo-spit where the bill-hooks had shorn through them. Now and then men, stacking the brushwood about the clearings, peered into it for eggs and nests ; and the frightened birds fluttered continually here and there, refusing to leave their young.

At the gnarled oak that stood lowest down the slope of the wood Willie Ramsey and Jerry Holmes were already at work with the great-axe. They swung alternately, and the white chips lay thick over their boots, and the deep notch, that was rapidly becoming deeper, made the tree look as if it was balanced on a blunt apex. A few yards beyond the flying chips lay the great double saw, a tin of grease for easing it, and a coil of rope ; and Jerry's wrinkled face twitched into wonderful folds and

creases as he delivered each blow. As again, for the tenth time, the thought of the forenoon drinking that the women would bring occurred to him, he grunted "Spell," dropped the head of his axe, and leaned on the heft to recover his breath.

"Ye look thirsty, too, my lad," he observed by and by, glancing up at Willie.

Willie passed his fingers across his brow and looked at them all wet. He was tall, black-browed, and black-haired, and his neck lifted at his chest with his breathing, and the muscles of his forearm started sharply as his fingers played on the heft of his axe.

"Ay, this ought to be grand stuff for ribs, if th' chopping of it's aught to reckon by," he answered.

"Nay, ye're limber enow ; 'tis owd bones like me it finds out," quoth Jerry, grinning. "'Tis th' season o' life wi' ye to think more o' th' women nor th' drink they bring. I ken your ways ; but me, I'm naughbut rare and thirsty."

"Well, maybe I'se mend o' that."

"Ay, Jessie 'll mend ye, if ye're mendable. Ye may laugh ; ginger's for game, and al'ays was——"

"They ken best where th' shoe pinches that has it on, Jerry."

"Ay, when they get it on ; thou'rt not shod yet, lad.—Well, wisdom's wasted o' youth ; let's to th' ribs an' knees again—— Spell——"

They turned to with the axes again.

Somewhere up the wood a man was setting a

hone to a bill-hook, and away to the right they had begun to chop at another tree. Willie and Jerry were well ahead, and nowhere were they sawing yet ; and as the chips started and flew, and the keen axes cut deeper and deeper into the bole, and Jerry's mouth and eyebrow flickered and dipped, they began to pass round the tree and to cut more carefully here and there. A whiff of strong tobacco came down the glade, and the placid bailiff stood and watched them.

"Ye'll be almost ready for th' ropes and cross-cut," he remarked, "and then there 'll be *one* on 'em down.—Eh, they must ha' seen some scenes, must these oaks! Ay, they must.—Are ye acquainted wi' these parts? No, say ye? Eh, things has happened i' this neighbourhood, hundreds o' years back. It were off th' Head, yonder, that Paul Jones fought, that ye 'll ha' heard tell of.—No! Well, that's surprising!"

He continued to talk in his mild, easy way, telling them his story of Paul Jones ; and, by and by, Willie shouted out loud, "Skipjack!" A call up the wood answered him.

"Skipjack" was Charlie Dodd. He came, an ungainly youth with a long neck, a back shaped like a lad's kite by reason of his sloping shoulders, and enormous hands and wrists.

"Nay, don't hang yoursel'," the bailiff observed as Charlie passed a loop of rope about his neck ; and Jerry and Willie hoisted him up to a bough.

Dead bark and twigs and tree-scurf came down as the Skipjack swung from branch to branch ; and he made fast the loop to a high fork, gave a grimace and shout, and came down it in three perilous-looking swings, his especial feat. Jerry smeared the great cross-cut with grease, and they set it into the notch. The sun shone warmly through the bare branches, and the ruddy oak-apples made a rich colour against the sky. Sawdust lodged in the folds of the clothing of the two men as they bent their backs to the cross-cut, and the birds cried more and more loudly. They were chopping in several places at once now, and from the top of another tree the Skipjack gave another shout. Now and then Willie and Jerry loosened the saw and rested, their faces crimson ; and the bailiff mused among the oaks and told over again the story of Paul Jones. Then Willie and Jerry set the saw aside ; the tree was ready for the fall ; and men ran from here and there, and gathered round the oak, and took the rope and set the huge tree gently rocking on its base. The tree-scurf descended on them, and the birds made a piteous clamour. Willie ran in with a wedge ; the tree tottered, hung for a moment beyond its point of balance, and then gave a long groan and twisted slowly. Men sprang for safety as it came over. There was a rushing and breaking of branches, the fibres burst with a loud crack, the boughs whipped out dangerously, and the tree left a great white

blade like that of a sword standing a yard up from the butt. They stood back for a minute, as men stand back from the dying body of a formidable beast ; then they ran in and set to work with saws and axes in half a dozen places at once. While some sawed and lopped its branches, Willie and Jerry marked the trunk into six-foot lengths and took the cross-cut again. Soon the women brought the morning ale ; and then the pilling and bolling irons, like spoons with a solid bowl, were got out.

Fat Maggie had brought a straw hassock, and as she sat wide-lapped on it and worked her pilling-iron the points of her elbows were redder than her red arms. Nan and Jennie Holmes, Jerry's wife and daughter, sat in a litter of brushwood, and Jennie's face worked like her father's as she cut the slashes with a knife and thrust in the iron. The sun caught Jessie Wheeler's hair as she sat in the brown bracken with her skirts tucked close about her ankles ; and now and then she glanced across to where Willie thrust at the noisy cross-cut. The air became fragrant with the smell of sawdust and the sharp odour of the new green timber, and the sap glistened in bright films and webs as the bark parted from the white wood. The piles of the smaller bark accumulated about the women, and the white-stripped twigs and billets turned a pale buff in an hour. The creak and rush of another falling tree came from up the wood. Fat Maggie clapped her black hands to her ears as a man began

to set a saw immediately behind her ; and Willie's oak lay in three great sections, the middle one of which had rolled to one side.

The easy-going bailiff came up again as Jerry stooped to examine the face of the butt section. "What is it?" he said ; and Jerry pointed at something. Willie took a bar and rolled the middle section away ; and all three of them stooped again to the cut.

"If that's a ring-shake——" Jerry began ; but the bailiff rubbed his hands and beamed.

"It isn't a ring-shake ; I'll lay I know what it is. Look you ! saw this slice clean out, here."

Other men gathered round and watched them saw a three-inch slice out of the tree. The saw polished the heart of the oak like marble, and a foot or so within the bark, and three or four inches in length, a curious mark showed. The bailiff took an axe and chopped into the flat disc ; then he took up the disc and one of the fragments.

"Well !" he said, his mild face radiant, "I wouldn't ha' missed that for a crown ! I've heard tell of 'em, too ! D'ye see ?"

Buried in the heart of the tree, and fitting together like a die and matrix, were two letters, an M and a V. They had been cut long ago in the wood itself, and had become overgrown with the newer wood, but had never healed. Men called to one another, and all pressed for a sight of the marvel. Jessie's head rested for a moment against Willie's

shoulder, and his hand sought hers as the pieces were passed from hand to hand ; and soon the bailiff said, " I'se take these home," and put them into his pocket.

The women fetched the dinner at midday, and, after it, Willie and Jessie sat apart in a little copse of hazels. A lean-to of thick base-bark screened them from the others, and the green tassels of the hazels dangled over them. His fingers strayed in her rich hair ; as she smiled up at him the corners of her mouth were dewy as the sap that glistened under the rind of the great oaks. Nellie, the retriever bitch, blinked drowsily at them both.

" It's no deeper nor I ha' for thee," she whispered by and by, as if he knew without telling what she spoke of.

" What, dear ? "

" Th' tree," she murmured ; and again he caressed her burnished hair.

" Only ten days and we'se be home," he said, presently ; " shall ye be glad, Jess ? "

" Yes, love ; there's no comfort wi' yon sea all about ye, like as if something were al'ays watching ye. I'd sooner meet thee aback o' th' little lambing-shed at home o' th' hill. An' when we're back I'se mak' thee a dozen shirts wi' my wages, dear——"

Willie laughed. " And what shall we gi'e her, Nellie ? " he asked the retriever ; and the animal moved her tail lazily, hearing her name. Soon

they heard stirrings behind the hazel copse ; the women began to pack up tins and dishes ; and Jerry's voice called, " Where's my mate ? " The men scattered again about the clearings. Again the wood became noisy with the chop of the axe, the knock of the iron, and the hoarse voice of the saw. The huge sections, stripped of their thick rinds, lay white on the bracken. White faggots gleamed against the tan of the inner bark, against the pink-budding thorn and the slate-purple brambles and the quick green of the hazels and elders. The men made another spell of half-an-hour late in the afternoon ; and when the sunset gun boomed sullenly from the ship off the Head, they covered the irons and saws and axes with sacking, hid them under a stack of brushwood, and turned their faces towards the sheds for supper.

III.—THE PRESS.

Dim riding-lights twinkled down in Portsannet Harbour, and a few swinging oil lanterns crowded the narrow streets with dense shadows. Threads of light came through cracks of barred and shuttered windows, and the rusty glimmerings of the horn lanterns that hung in antique iron brackets on the angles of houses showed the short flights of cobbled steps and the precipitous ladders of wood that seemed to tumble from one level of the streets to another. The strong odour of dead fish, brine, tarred nets, and groynes and timbers half rotted by the sea-worms, lay over the town ; and incessant tuggings and gruntings, with over all the sigh and rustle of the sea, came from the smacks and keels and cobbles that moved at their moorings.

From an alley down by the bridge a harsh clamour broke out, and half a mile away you could distinguish the shouts and oaths and cries. It was down by the bridge that the sailors' taverns and kitchens lay, and the men who sat snug by their own firesides nodded, as much as to say they had expected it. They knew that Portsannet was not a quota-port ;

but they knew also that the lieutenants of His Majesty's ships did not stick at niceties when the gun-deck complement ran low, and they had been wary of a press as soon as the ship had dropped anchor. And so the bolts had been shot, and the cumbrous bars set into the staples ; as for the "Mermaid" and the "Anchor," the press was welcome to the tinkers and rogues and gipsies they would find there with the women.

Jews and water-side men and sellers of old copper and iron and cordage kept the shops adjacent to the "Mermaid" and "Anchor," and such among them as had no dread of the press were gathered with three or four women about the closed door of the "Mermaid." Half a dozen unkempt sailors, with cudgels and stretchers, thrust them back, keeping the door ; and the shrill cries of the women and the gruff voices of the men filled the narrow alley. From an upper window opposite the inn a ship's chandler shook his fist ; and a score of yards away a few men peered round corners, ready to take to their heels. A bony virago, who had been cast half drunk from the tavern, screamed at the men-o'-war's men in the fishwives' tongue ; and a coxswain with a tarred hat pushed her back continually as she ever advanced.

"See you're not taken, you scald trull !" he menaced her ; "you lack little but a beard o' being a man, and we have two bonnie Lord-Mayor's men you could berth between !"

"Ay, ye damned tarrybreeks, ye women i' petticoats; what th' jails turns out th' gun-deck doesn't mak' dainty wi', ye——!"

"Dainty, ho, ho!" another bawled; "chuck, chuck, come wi' me, dainty——!"

"Yah, ye rascals!" the Chandler shouted from his window, "ye rotten mast-greasing rogues—ye captain's chicken-crammers—wi' a red-checked shirt at th' gratings once a month——"

He cursed them, and they taunted him for his stolen tallow and canvas, and bade him stop hammering the King's arrow out of copper bolts and untwisting the coloured strand that marked his cordage as filched from the King's dockyards. The rakish woman broke a window with a stone, and cried through the opening, "Ned! Ned!" and the coxswain thrust her back with his hand on her flat breast, and took her a rap over the knuckles. The men handled their stretchers as if they would as lief have broken a head or two as not.

Suddenly the inn door opened, and there was a press forward. A lieutenant appeared in the entrance, his cocked hat athwart like a half-moon and his hooked nose sticking out scarcely less prominently as he turned his profile. Other men could be seen behind him, and the woman darted forward with a cry of "Ned!"

"Turn that slut off!" the lieutenant ordered curtly; and he grumbled to himself: "A pretty lot o' cattle to pink! I want men with bodies!—We'll

try the Wood, then. . . . Here, you long rascal : in case you're deceiving me, do you know what they keep on a ship in a red-baize bag ? ”

The fellow the woman had addressed as Ned snivelled, and the Chandler across the alley cried, “ That's him that robs th' roosts ! Feel in his pocket for handkerchiefs—— ! ”

“ You don't, eh ? Well, it makes your back black—black, like dead liver, d'you hear ? And some have chosen hanging before a flogging with it. If it isn't as you say in the Wood, that's your choice, too, my man ! ”

The man blubbered in his fear : “ It's so, captain. There's one fellow swings down a tree on a rope, a right sailor for you—Skipjack they call him—there's a two-three sheds, wi' a long pole-wain—— ”

“ Bring those other tinkers out, coxswain ; they shall go with us. Which way ?—Back, you woman ! ”

The Chandler screamed, hanging half out of his window : “ Yah, ye walking fever ! Ye'd sell a real man to save your skin, would ye ? But ye 'll go yet for a sessions-bird ! Choose th' hanging afore th' red check—save up your rum and tak' it drunk—— ”

“ Fling a stone at that man, somebody,” the officer said.

The “ Mermaid ” emptied itself into the street—a score or so of the men of the press, seven

or eight wretched vagrants, and one or two of the sailors' doxies who had remained in hiding. A few of the seamen slung their lanterns on their cudgels ; the whole company moved ; and, as they passed to the harbour front, candles and heads appeared in windows, and groans and hootings followed them. They turned up the main street ; the sailors thwacked their miserable captives as they failed to make haste enough up the cobbled steps and timber stairways ; one or two of the women dropped behind, breathless ; and at the top of the street the Portsannet folk stayed and watched the men of the press take the road that led to the Ladyshaws.

* * * * *

Jessie Wheeler slept soundly in the niche on top of the hay. The nightingale on the thorn was silent, and the embers of the fire on the hearth in the penthouse had sunk to a grey wood ash, that only now and then the light breeze fanned to a faint pink glow. The clouds were close folded overhead ; hardly a whisper came from the Ladyshaws. Nellie and the two terriers slept across the thresholds, and with a last soft settling the fire itself seemed to go to sleep.

The retriever heard the noise first, and, suddenly alert, dropped to the down-charge. The terriers set their heads and fore feet low, and growled softly. A man asleep in a shed muttered mechanically, " Quiet ! " and turned over. From the brow at the

bottom of the meadows came the sound of voices and of a moving company ; and then the voices dropped, but the moving came nearer. The terriers broke suddenly into a hubbub of barking ; and Jessie woke, and started and trembled.

Jerry Holmes, without his boots, came out of the shed with a lantern ; it showed the furrows of his own face, but not the forms that were approaching. They had muffled their lanterns about with coats and handkerchiefs, and the shrouding of one had been done with a spotted neckerchief that showed dabbled with a dusky pattern. Jerry knew no more than that honest men do not wander about the country at night, a score in a band, with doused lanterns ; and he gave a shout of " Up, lads ! " The terriers barked furiously ; the shout was answered by a score of voices ; the cloths were twitched off the lanterns ; and the press and the seven or eight pressed rushed forward. Jerry, for all he was inland, knew what it was, and his hand tightened on a mattock that all at once he seemed to find in his grasp without being able to tell how he had come by it.

In the big barn doorway the Skipjack and Willie Ramsey appeared. They, too, had caught up what lay nearest to hand—Charlie, the crooked iron handle of some machine, and Willie a breadth of a split lid with a batten across it full of bent nails. There were no doors to the barn, and behind these three other faces peered out anxiously. Old Jerry

muttered, "Nay, this is no good ; we're done afore we start" ; and he thought of the axes that lay under the brushwood in the Ladyshaws.

"That's the Skipjack, him wi' th' crook ; what did I tell ye ?" a tall fellow, bound, cried appealingly to a man with a hooked nose and a blue coat with white facings. "And him wi' th' black hair's Willie something—he were back of a hazel bush wi' a lass—it's true what I say——"

"Close in and seize them," the lieutenant ordered. "Creep along the wall, one or two of you, and the rest rush in."

"Ay, that's th' road," Jerry muttered again, bitterly ; "well, we'll ha' one knock——"

And, indeed, there could be but one end to it ; the plight was hopeless. The short scuffle barely lasted two minutes. A stretcher cracked across Jerry's shins and he went down ; at the very first stroke that Willie struck, his batten nailed itself fast to a cudgel, and, having no handle, was wrenched from his hand ; and the Skipjack's crank, having a wooden case for the grip, twirled uselessly this way and that. They struck with their hands, but were overborne and rolled over with their assailants, and the sailors leaped over them as they rolled, and poured into the barn. Half of them had not even their boots on, but desperate grunts and scuffles sounded inside the dark sheds. Jerry, his arms already secured, was crouched up against a wall, his head bowed almost to his injured shins.

The Skipjack lay near him with the breath knocked out of him ; and as Willie Ramsey lay flat on his belly with a heavy knee in his back he suddenly made a " Tss, Nell ! " between his teeth, and the retriever fastened herself to the officer's hand. The lieutenant gave a cry and an oath with the pain, and then he drew and shortened his sword and ran the retriever through the body.

Suddenly Willie shouted in a loud voice, " Bide where ye are, Jessie ! " and at that the informer pressed nearer to the lieutenant.

" Ay, they ha' some women wi' em, four of 'em, but I don't know where they are——"

" Curse 'em," snarled the officer, wringing the dark blood from his hand ; " where there's women there's men. Rout 'em out."

A dozen men were already at the door of the laithe. Suddenly they fell back, and the informer, raising himself on his toes, cried, " Ay, her wi' red hair ; wasn't it true what I told ye, captain ? . . . "

Her arms were white and bare to the short shift that showed at her shoulders, and her brown hands fumbled at her waist. Her hair lay in a heavy mass half down her back, and her boots were thrust on unlaced. Her mouth was open, and her eyes shifted rapidly, seeking Willie. She saw him, and made a little shuffling run, her boots slipping ; and a sailor barred her way and glanced at the officer for orders.

The lieutenant advanced and peered into her face.

"Wife? . . . Ah, sweetheart!" His eyes rested on the gold locket at her naked bosom. He put out his hand to touch it, and Willie cried in a low, husky voice, "Man, loose my hands . . . gi'e me my billet o' wood and tak' your sword . . . or wi' my naked hands——"

Jessie dropped to her knees and seized the officer's hand. He drew it away with a sharp exclamation.

"Oh, 'tis blood!" she cried.—"Nay, I didn't mean to hurt thee, sir, but dinna tak' him! Let me bind thy hand, i' pity and friendliness, and dinna tak' him! A handkercher and some watter—see, let me cleanse it and heal it wi' herbs and draw th' foulness out wi' my mouth. But poor wood-folk we are, fro' th' inland parts, and harm none, but pill th' trees i' spring-time, ask th' bailiff else. . . . He's my lad, and 'll wed me this back-end, and 'll ha' th' farm when his father's ta'en—nay, I sorrow to see thee bleed so!—and thou's ha' my prayers every night. . . ."

His blood had dripped to her own naked arms, and then, all at once, she saw the dead retriever. Her mouth went round as an O with horror. Still kneeling, she sank back till she had to put one hand behind her for support; and she breathed softly, "Oh—Nellie!" The next moment she was up on her feet, quivering and ugly with passion.

"Ay?" she cried in a high voice, "Ay? Th' dog too? Let's see thee, Nell.—Ay, right through;

th' dog, too! They tak' their swords to dogs, gentlemen does; cocked hats and lace on 'em, they kill dogs. Tak' her and wash her, Maggie, for me to bury: and ye ken herbs.—Did I touch yon man's hand that kills dogs?—Ye ken herbs: tell me o' one that keeps wounds oppen, and lets 'em drain, and sets a venom i' 'em so they shriek at th' sight o' watter, dog-killers, and slaver at their cruel mouths through their teeth that's locked i' torment——”

“Oh, come away, Jessie!” Maggie implored, seizing her arms.

“A sword! Ay, a sword to a dog, but a man wi' his bare hands is bound fast wi' cords——”

“Do you know who you're wreaking this on?” said the lieutenant, in a smothered voice; “not on me, my lass!——” His voice changed, and he cried abruptly, “Come, stir; do we need a whole night for a bare dozen capstan-pushers? Fall in! Gag that whining pickpocket! Form 'em up, coxswain! Ready?”

“Ye'd best tak' th' dog's tongue,” Jessie cried, “chance another gentleman boasts he's killed him. Lend me thy sword while I cut it out!”

“By God, your own ought to be cut out, you red witch!—Faugh!—Up, men!”

“Ay, forward; I'm walking Portsannet way mysel'; I've a dead dog to show folk; me and Nellie's for Portsannet!—Come, poor lass.”

She took the dead retriever up in her arms. The

women strove to restrain her, but she answered them in a hard voice; and the hook-nosed lieutenant, grinding his teeth as she railed, was yet unable to keep his eyes from her throat and shoulders. She saw it, and laughed shrilly, and made a display of the bare arms that held the dog for him. He swore a filthy oath under his breath; Fat Maggie and Jerry's wife and daughter wept; the men's faces were hard set; and the two terriers leaped and barked about the lieutenant as Jessie clucked them on with her tongue and asked him where his sword was. They set forward down the meadows; a dim ring of orange showed where the moon swam behind the clouds; and as they left the meadows and began the descent to the valley the coxswain stepped back to Jessie, who was heaping taunt on taunt, and said, "Let it alone—ye're but making it worse for him . . ."

IV.—AT PORTSANNET.

The news had spread in Portsannet, and many of the decent fisherfolk had joined the common sort at the head of the street. They murmured, but it was little of their business, after all. Had any of their own kin been seized, they might have resisted ; as it was, Portsannet was well rid of a rogue or two ; and as for the Pillers, they, too, were in a sort vagrants. True, when a red-haired, slipshod, unkempt wench appeared, holding a dead retriever bitch in her arms, they wondered, and some called her a hussy ; but others, looking again, cried that it was a shame. But a dead dog was not a deal to make a trouble about, and what they would be gladdest to see was the stern of the longboat that was fastened down by the jetty.

And why did Jessie, with her lover pinioned and about to be reft from her, take his case less passionately than that of the cold and heavy animal ? She could not have told you. Maybe her mind could comprehend only the small evil ; or, as men in moments of stress will occupy themselves with

foolish, trivial things, an instinct bade her hold the unbearable thought away from her. Likely enough it was this last ; for, suddenly seeing Willie's haggard eyes on her, she cried, faintly : " Dinna look at me now, or 'twill be th' last ! Turn thy face away ! And ye—some o' ye—show me where th' bailiff lives——"

A woman took her own shawl and set it over her shoulders. " Dinna shame us, lassie," she said ; and " Ay, ay—where d'ye say he lives ? " Jessie replied.

" Best tak' her to our spare cham'er, Ellen," a man's voice said ; but Jessie called again for the bailiff : he was a harmless man, wi' a pleasant word for folk ; his oaks and pines were but half cut ; nay, they had not started with the pines. . . .

" I'll tak' ye to th' bailiff, dearie. Come, then," said the woman who had given her the shawl ; and suddenly Jessie began to tremble. Without glancing once at Willie, she crossed to the narrow entry of a passage, laid down the dog's body, and then turned to the woman. " Come, make haste," she said. She passed the lieutenant without seeming to see him. The two women turned into a dark lane that was deep rutted with carts, as if it led to a farm. By and by Jessie began to run.

Through a bare orchard a candle shone in the bailiff's window. They found him in his comfortable kitchen smoking his strong tobacco. The two pieces of wood he had brought from the Lady-

shaws lay on the table before him, and with the point of his penknife he was counting the rings of the tree's growth. "A hundred and ninety-six—a hundred and ninety-seven—a hundred and ninety-eight," he said, counting aloud; and when he got to the two hundredth ring he stuck the point of his penknife into the wood and looked up mildly and enquiringly.

Jessie's railing was past now; she thought no more of Nellie.

"They're taking th' men—th' press—that's cutting the trees; they're taking 'em down th' street now," she announced shortly; "go stop 'em."

"Men?" the bailiff enquired, quite unruffled: "Oh, ay, the Pillers. I remember ye were with 'em. Dear, dear, now; that's awk'ard. Two more days o' this weather and the leaves 'll be breaking out everywhere. We shall lose the price o' the bark—wi'out we could prosecute for it—no—now that's vexing . . . Ye'd see this piece of oak this morning? Of course. I've counted two hundred; think o' that! Two hundred year sin' them letters were cut, and more to count yet."

"But they're taking 'em—Willie and Jerry," Jessie murmured, dazed. "Like enow ye wouldn't know Willie's name—it were him cut them pieces for ye . . . Oh, man!" she cried suddenly, "he's my lover—chance ye're wed yoursel'——"

"Eh?" said the bailiff; "No."

THE PILLERS.

"Oh, think, wi' your talk o' two hundred year—happen lovers cut them marks, same as ye've cut a lass's name on a tree!"

"Them that I heard tell of was King's marks," the bailiff mused, "but ay, happen this would be some lad——"

Jessie dropped face foremost on the table, and the fisherwoman spoke sharply.

"Come out o' your moon-trances, Matthew Hudson!" she cried; "think what can be done. They'll up anchor in a couple of hours wi' th' turn o' th' tide.—Wad th' Warden stop 'em?"

Jessie moaned softly on the table, and the bailiff deliberated.

"Ay—no—there's no knowing; the Warden might."

"Then put th' horse i' the trap, ye daft fool, and tak' us ower!" the woman cried, losing her temper.

And as the bailiff set his pieces of wood aside with a sigh, he murmured, "Me wed? No——"

In ten minutes the trap was ready, and the bailiff started the horse at a walk down the rutted lane.

"Give me them reins, ye fat oaf!" Ellen exclaimed. "D'ye think to-morrow 'll do for this?"

She shook up the horse, and the trap rocked and jolted. She made a cut with the whip as they reached the street; but Jessie, her face buried in the shawl, saw nothing of the throng a couple of score yards away.

"He trots better nor he gallops," the bailiff

suggested mildly, as they turned into another miry lane.

Soon Ellen passed the reins to the bailiff and set her arm about Jessie's swaying, jolting body. She turned back a corner of the shawl to say in her ear, "'Twill be all right yet, dearie ! Come, be easy, now."

Before them, where the road wound round the headland, spread the impenetrable blackness of the sea. A sharp turn showed lights half a mile ahead, a little way up the hill ; and as they drew nearer the bailiff remarked, as if the fact were not without interest, "He's up, for a wonder ; I'd have laid a crown he'd gone to bed."

He pulled up at a wooden gate that had neither lodge nor avenue. One end of the large house a little way up the hill was brightly lighted.

"Lean on my shoulder, lassie," Ellen said. "And you, Matthew, just step as if ye knew what ye'd come about."

They passed up the treeless drive, and at a dark side door the bailiff rang a bell. A servant appeared with a candle, the bailiff said a few words, and they were shown into a small office with a desk and ledgers and tin boxes. The servant left the candle on the desk, and they waited.

In five minutes a heavily-built, grave-looking, elderly man appeared in the doorway. He looked first at one, then at another of the three, and, finally, he turned to the bailiff.

"What's the meaning of this, Hudson?" he demanded.

The bailiff glanced at Ellen and murmured, "Ay, 'tis late—past eleven—half-past eleven, I should say——"

"I'll tell ye th' meaning of it, sir," Ellen said, abruptly. "They'll be off afore Matthew's done looking for his wits i' th' candle-flame." She told him how eight or nine unoffending landsmen, going quietly about their trade, had been seized for service on the gun-deck of the third-rater that lay off Portsannet Head.

"Well?" said the Warden; and Matthew removed his eyes from the flame of the candle.

"Ay," he said. "It's them that's pilling up at Ladyshaws, and the question is, sir, in two days the sap 'll be set and ye 'll lose the price o' the bark. Wi' them off and away, an action would never lie. The best ye could do would be to seize the odd day's pilling."

"I know this woman; who's the other?"

"Nay, I'm sure I can't tell ye," the bailiff replied; and then, at a touch from Ellen, Jessie let the shawl slip from her head, and looked at the grave face of the Warden. She did not speak. Quietly, as quietly as if she had been at her own bedside, she sank to her knees and folded her hands. She closed her eyes, and the Warden looked on her with knitted brows for a moment, and then began to walk up and down the small apartment.

"I think I see," he said, by and by, stopping before Jessie, and taking her hand and raising her. "I passed Edward my word," he continued, half to himself, "on condition our own people were unmolested. That I can't withdraw, not even on the plea that these are in my own employ. But I'll do what I can. Follow me."

He led the way along a dark passage, and at the end of it drew a curtain aside. A soft glow of light spread about them. "Go in that door," the Warden said, pushing Jessie gently forward; and Jessie found herself in a dining-room where half a dozen candles in silver sticks stood over their own still images in a polished table. "There's the Commander himself," said the Warden.

A white-haired gentleman, in a rich uniform of blue, white, and gold, sat at one corner of the shining-table. A decanter of wine stood at his elbow, the breaking of the soft light through which dyed the white ruffle at his wrist with ruby red. He was looking at a watch that he held in his hand, and Jessie knew not what beauty it was in his face that seemed to steal like a comforting balsam over her heart. The Warden crossed and spoke in a low voice to him, and presently he looked up from his watch. At a sign from him Jessie stood forward, and Ellen and the bailiff fell back.

"What is your name?" he asked her, in a very gentle voice; and when she had told him, "Where do you live?" he asked again. She told him that,

too ; and then he began to ask her many questions. What brought her so far from her home ? Of what sort were her friends ? What her daily life ?—She answered all very tremblingly ; she felt that there could be no passion in this man's presence ; and by and by he knew all about Willie and Jerry and Fat Maggie and the fatal journey that had given her her first sight of the sea.

“ Come nearer, my maid.—And so you have but now seen the sea and a ship ? ”

“ Ay, sir, to my sorrow.”

“ So ? ” answered the stately gentleman. “ Ah, women, women, never one of you yet but dreaded the sea !—Tell me, Henry : is it that they know the sea is more powerful than they ? Do they know the dream that we, we others, dream—the discontent that lies in all achievement, the urge ? . . . And not the youth only ; the old man, too, is drawn from the chimney-corner, as I am drawn—as I must go even now with the turn of the tide.—Well, I had my choice, and twice or thrice I have warmed my hands at a fire that glows on no husband's hearth. Perhaps I shall do so once more, and so die content. For marrying some, but we others are for the sea, the dream, the unrest. . . . ” He mused, and Jessie wondered if the face of a saint could be more beautiful than that on which her eyes were fixed.

“ Well, that is my destiny, not another's,” he resumed by and by.—“ My child, have they told

you why the acorn is set in the ground, and tended and fostered till it becomes a tree, and then dies, as we all die, to a nobler service ? ”

Jessie did not reply, not rightly understanding him ; and the white-haired commander, putting his fingers into the pocket of his waistcoat, drew out two acorns. He considered them as they lay in the palm of his hand.

“ Heart o’ the oak, that holds it all for us, for us others—the rest we scorned in our youth, the boundless sea, the endeavour that must be its own reward, the pleasantness of life foregone. . . . It may be that we chose ignorantly, blindly ; perhaps we have doubted since, doubted but it had been better to choose the shelter of the rafters and the woman at our side and the little ones . . . no matter. Twice or thrice, and once more under God’s pleasure . . . Girl, I come ashore but thrice in ten years, and there are hardly ten of years now remaining to me. For thirty years I have carried acorns in my pocket, and have planted them when opportunity came, and have seen tall oaks of my own planting. And your woodsmen come in the season and cut them down, and they are bolted together to be the houses of some of us—our hearths, homes, lodging, we others who have chosen it so . . . Think of it when you see your lover set his hand to the axe, and when you feel his arms about you in the darkness, too . . . You, too, have your choice ; go—nay,

stay.—You shall see the last of me, Henry : the gig is waiting now.—Plant me these last acorns, girl ; heart o' the oak, heart o' the oak. . . .”

* * * * *

The tide rustled and talked as it receded swiftly down the river channel, and here and there one of the stakes that marked out the waterway could be distinguished dimly in the darkness. The craft in the harbour began to heel over as the water left them. The tide washed and slapped against hulls and pebbles and wooden groynes and stone angles ; and at the top of the breakwater half a dozen lanterns showed a group of dark figures that looked seaward.

The riding-lights of the ship had changed position ; and between the ship and the harbour mouth the grunt of oars on rowlocks could be heard. A light appeared at the bow of a boat and shone on the water that broke at its foot. The groups shuffled to one side of the breakwater as the creaking of the oars drew nearer, and they could see the effort of the rowers as the current became rapid and confined. The boat laboured up past the stone entrance, and a man ran along the breakwater, leaped down to the crunching pebbles, and cast a rope. The pebbles grated harshly as the group followed him and pressed down to the boats. A man sprang from the ship's boat to a rocking dinghy, and thence to another and another ; and


the boats tossed and knocked, and the water lapped loudly. The man sprang down to the beach, and Jessie Wheeler ran to him with a low cry. Another followed him, but, except that Jennie Holmes cried once "Father!" nobody spoke. In a few minutes all were landed, and the boat was thrust off immediately. Mechanically the group moved towards the breakwater again; they stood there as the boat dropped down the harbour and went out on the whispering tide.

Suddenly Jennie Holmes broke into hysterical sobs, and Willie Ramsey caught Jessie in his arms as she reeled against a wooden butt.

A woman touched his arm.

"Are ye him? . . . Ay, she's overwrought. Ye'd best carry her to my house while morning. Happen a two-three neighbours 'll put the rest o' ye up. What say ye, folk?"

—And the Pillers turned their backs to the sea, filed off the breakwater, and followed the men and women of Portsannet.




SKELF - MARY.

A wise man loves the ocean,
A good man loves the hills.

I.

WITH the wearing on of the afternoon, the flat, treeless country to which for half a day I had steadily dropped had but increased in monotony, and long before nightfall I had begun to weary for other company than that of my own meditations. The road, of a reddish gravel, had begun to cross, by wooden bridges, innumerable drains and channels and narrow waterways; and that there was clay beneath it was evident no less from the wreaths and wisps of vapour that crept fantastically over carr and mere than from the sudden chills of the air, that seemed to stand in banks or to move in thick, idle currents. The clatter of the mare's hoofs on the bridges flushed multitudes of waterfowl, that rose with harsh cries and beatings of wings; and from the number of gulls I had noticed among these while yet a little light remained, I had judged I could not be far from the sea.



How it came to pass that I, having had lands of my own, should find myself so circumstanced as to be fain to look after those of somebody else as factor or steward, is of no present moment ; it is more to the point that, if this was the domain of the Master of Skelf, I liked it exceedingly little. The continual flurry and commotion of the water-fowl seemed to rouse in me a restlessness ; and, remembering what Cardan had said of lands with a dark and fennish air, that they had the property of folding our thoughts back on themselves, I could only hope that I should not prove the worse bailiff for being acquainted with Cardan.

At first I mistook the man's lantern for an ignis fatuus ; but I heard a whistle and the panting of a dog, and he gave me good-evening. He was a tall fellow, with a sheepskin about him ; he carried his lantern at the end of a long pole ; and he told me, as he trotted by my side, that I was within the confines of Skelf Decoy. I eased the mare that he might keep pace with me.

" Ay, this is Skelf Decoy, and I tend it ; they call me Ducky Watt, but they mean Decoy. It isn't what it were, not for fish, sin' they drained it, but there's Friday-meat yet, and birds. . . . Ower th' Wolds, are ye ? Well, it's a good air o' th' Wolds. They ha' farmed part about here too, but it's a black ear and thin crops ; that's th' fogs. . . . Ay, we fish—hark ! yon's a pike—trout and eels and roach and pike—and tak' birds for

th' markets. Ye'll be a arable man ; all's carrs hereabouts ; but I don't doubt ye know all about Skelf-Mary."

I told him that I had never been there before.

"Ay ? H'm ! . . . Ye'll know nowt o' th' sea i' these parts, then ? "

I said that I did not.

"H'm !—well, this is how it is. Th' sea's taking it, as it's ta'en Auburn and Hartburn and Ravenspur ; and a two-three stops, but th' most's flitted months back ; ye'll see to-morrow.—Ye won't ha' heard o' Buttevant-Mary neither : no. Well, they talk o' bells chiming under th' sea o' still nights, and folks seen walking up and down th' wharves and marts, and all that ; I think them's tales ; but Kempery and Flaxton isn't tales. Th' Sheriff o' Kingston, he'll show ye th' Court Rolls o' Flaxton ; and Kempery—I'll show ye where Kempery is to-morrow, for ye'd best bide wi' me to-night.—Ay, they took Flaxton Church to Windlesea i' carts ; and then there's sea-marks . . . "

"In a word, the sea's advancing ? "

"Ay ; sometimes just licking-like, and sometimes a dozen yards of a sudden ; ye'll see to-morrow.—And th' sea doesn't keep all it taks, neither. Ye'll be a arable man, say ; well, there's a thousand acres o' warp come up out o' Humber, and wheat on it now ; a foot-bridge joins it ; but there's men has seen deep keels, half a dozen on 'em, passing up yon same channel. That's that

side ; and o' this, as I tell ye, a farmer can go to bed i' reaping-time and wake up wi' a swath or two less to reap. . . ."

He continued to tell me tales of lost villages, of broken houses with their chambers open to the winds, of wooden groynes that had been put up and abandoned, and a deal more well fitted to the hour and place. Suddenly I asked him about the Master of Skelf-Mary ; and the light of the lantern shone on his knuckles as he thumbed his chin.

"Ay, ye're th' new steward. . . . What wad ye know o' him ?" he asked, slowly.

"Seeing I know nothing, you can't get wrong."

"And that's providential—if it was true," he retorted. "Well, sir, if ye can't bide while morn-ing, ye can put your questions now."

But, though I interrogated him, he so fubbed me off with bland and wary answers that I was little the wiser by the time I desisted. The Master of Skelf-Mary, I gathered, was all but bed-ridden, and in very ill fame with such as read their Bibles (but that might have been because he had turned the chapel of the mansion into a library); but my friend was sensible, and careful to assign to others certain tales of devils and familiars and voices that servants, with their ears at the rosewood door of the library, had heard o' nights. Nevertheless, his reluctance was evident, and by and by he pointed out a beam of light smothered in the fen-mists ; that was his cottage.

I supped and lay that night in his hut ; and by eight o'clock next morning he had conducted me to the village of Skelf-Mary. It was much as he had described it. One or two houses on the north side of the market-place, opposite an ancient butter-cross, appeared to be tenanted, as did also a row of very poor cottages that ran towards the sea ; the rest was desolate, and already grass pushed between the cobbles. Two or three folk appeared at upper windows, hearing the sound of hoofs (having no business to take them abroad, I judged they were still abed) ; and as we left the cottages a couple of rabbits scampered across the street. Half a mile before us lay the church and hall, and beyond it the smooth sea, with a brig motionless far out.

"This road," said the keeper, indicating a bridle-path to the right ; but that was so plainly not the road that I answered shortly, "No, it isn't," and pushed forward towards the church. Five minutes brought me level with it ; and then I stopped with an exclamation.

A few yards beyond a rail of hedge-stakes the road ended as suddenly as if it had been cut off with a knife. The fencing, that was continued on either hand, straggled to the north across the middle of the graveyard, and the marks of wheels in the red clay and the unsightly mounds in which they ended showed what had recently been done. Over the rails, hulks and shoulders of earth fouled the beach ; and from the point to which, with a

dreadful curiosity, I advanced I saw three square ends, ochrous with the clay, sticking out to the tide like "throughs" in a stone wall.

The keeper pointed to a three-inch fissure at my feet.

"That's th' next," he said, gloomily; "th' first heavy rain—a touch o' frost—th' sea eats it down there, and a touch o' frost and rain Yonder's Kempery." . . . He pointed to the motionless brig.

"Let's get to the hall," I said; and we did not speak further till we reached the mansion that had so gruesome a prospect to the north of it. It was of grey pebbles, set in a sort of mud-mortar, and was very ancient and handsome. The south lawn was overlooked by an octagonal bay-window, from the flat leads of which (so the keeper said) dead and gone lords of the manor and their chaplains had addressed the assembled tenantry; and this bay formed one end of a long western wing that I judged to be the chapel turned library. To the north lay the courtyard and outbuildings; and to the east, not twenty yards away, was the placid sea and the brig motionless over Kempery.

II.

Knowing what I now know, I think I might almost have guessed, from my first glance at him as the bandy-legged servant closed the rosewood door of the library behind me, what manner of man he was ; nevertheless, this knowledge was not long delayed. The bed he seldom left was wheeled into the octagonal window-bay ; he was propped up in wraps and blankets, with a book set against his sharp knees ; and as he turned, his profile, for flat brow and beak, was for all the world like some grotesque bird carved on a pillar or spout. His large dull eyes, too, protruded remarkably ; and the tying of the clout wherewith his head was bound as if for study resembled ears laid back.

“Ye are a day late, sir,” he said at once in a sick, querulous voice ; and when I answered that I had been stayed on the road, “Ay,” he complained, “it was a dark night last night ; enough. —And now that ye have seen the place in the daylight, ye’ll be of the same mind as the rest of them, eh ? ”

For all his sickness, this nettled me a little, and

I replied that if the opinion of others was that the coast in the immediate vicinity was not a pleasing sight, I was disposed to agree with them ; “ but,” I added, “ for that matter, I have some acquaintance with the sciences, and am free from superstition.”

“ Eh ? ” he said sharply. “ And what may *that* amount to ? ”

Certainly he had in some measure the right to catechise me, albeit not to be both petulant and domineering, as he was ; and as I answered his questions as to the extent of my reading, I noticed with what ease I could have taken up his shrivelled figure. By and by he changed abruptly to matters of business ; and as in this I wish to imitate his own brevity, I will only say that to a factor’s ordinary duties was to be added all the care of a considerable *déménagement*. He ceased ; and I had bowed and was for leaving him when he beckoned me to come nearer. I stooped over the couch.

“ Tell me,” he said, dropping his voice to a whisper, “ tell me, has it been your chance in the course of your reading to come across—this ? ”

His face was within a foot of mine, and I barely checked a sound that, for all the early morning, was one of fright. Few men but in an idle moment now and then have tried that trick of gazing into metals, and phials, and flames of candles ; and of the stupor or lethargy a man can work in himself by these means I had read in Olaus Magnus, in

Suavius, and elsewhere. Neither was I entirely ignorant of that disordered function of the mind whereby a man can people the world with images of his own raising ; but he was an ugly devil at best, and the abominable expression into which for a moment his eyeballs were deliberately set—the Squint Upwards and Inwards—added a sensible horror to the already horrible. . . . As I turned away his gaze righted again ; but I knew him now. “ I see ye know it,” he said.

“ I do, sir,” I answered curtly over my shoulder. “ What good the Platonists had of it I could never see, and, by your leave, I will confine myself to my stewardship, which I take to be the godlier business.”

“ He, he ! ” he chuckled weakly. “ Free from superstition, too !—So we both know it ; good, we will talk of it later.”

“ You shall pardon me,” thought I ; and left him.

Here, then, was Cardan out-Cardaned ; and there rose in my mind an image, not of this terrestrial sea that overwhelms the pleasant habitations of men, but of a dreader ocean, that of the terror of the Spirit, which, when men with anguish and labour have raised creeds and customs and laws against the void the thought of which they could not else endure, licks and laps till darkness cover all again. In this more heinous destruction and treason against all mankind this man trafficked.

But if I am to tell my tale—or, rather, to set down this inconclusive record—I must trust you to take my meaning without further words.

The conversation of the bandy-legged servant was, as I should have expected, of the commonplace of desolate neighbourhoods, and I omit it that I may come the sooner to the man under whose influence, within a week, I found myself. For it was easier to say that I would have no commerce with him other than that of my office than it was to perform it; and, being inveigled willy-nilly into it, I salved my conscience by persuading myself that my study was of him and not of his theories. Unless you had read somewhat of the books I have mentioned, you would have found the fabric of folly that composed even the ordinary of his conjectures hard to credit; and since I cannot omit it altogether, it was of such stuff as this: Whether spirits do not commonly assume the globular shape, as being the most perfect of shapes; whether, could we but see them, the air might not be (as Leo Suavius held) thick with them as with snowflakes; whether that be true of the witches of Lapland, *ecstasi omnia prædicere*; and, above all, of the substance of spirits and of the texture of those light essences that, being divided, come with such celerity together again. That he should need a doctor to come over from Kingston twice in the week was little wonder to me; and when, shortly, this doctor persuaded me that my companionship would be

good for my employer's unsettled mind, I only stipulated that I should be spared that distortion of his face that had first shocked me.

The night whereon the invalid first broke his word in this respect was one evening in the middle of October, when I had been, maybe, a month at Skelf-Mary. For several days we had had thick, misty weather (I remember I had been that afternoon to the Decoy, and I leave it to you which was the more dismal, carr or coast), and the fog, penetrating the library, made haloes about the two tapers. The master's face was very white and peaked that evening, and the little nodule of his hooked nose where bone joined cartilage showed sharply. The chamber was full of vague mists and shadows; now and then a ship's horn hooted far out; we had ceased to talk; and while I had settled down to a bundle of lawyer's tangle, he had apparently dozed over the book that was propped against his knees.

I know not what it was that caused me to look up, but I did so as if I had been bidden; and from the way his glassy corneas were set they might have been so for hours. He would no more have felt it had a fly crossed his eyeballs than do cattle. He had managed again to put himself into his trance, and instinctively I glanced over my shoulder to the upper end of the library.

"This is beyond the bargain, sir!" I cried, bringing my hand down on the table. He did not hear.

I passed a taper before his eyes, but he did not see. It lasted for some minutes ; then the balls traversed the farther end of the library, and the lids flickered and fell. He was asleep. Again I thumped the table, and he woke sluggishly.

"I had your promise," I said sternly.

"Eh, eh? What's that ye say? . . . I have been asleep."

"Man, do you call *that* sleep?—"

"Eh? . . . Ah, yes! . . . It is my weakness, sir, and ye shall pardon it," he replied; and I truly believe that for the moment the creature felt a sort of contrition. Suddenly there came over me a feeling nearer to compassion than to disgust; God knows I am backward to judge those He has seen fit to set in the world with me; and I turned to him earnestly.

"'Tis for your own good," I said in a moved voice; "good Heaven! . . . Tell me what you were looking at yonder."

The weakness following that vile ecstasy seemed to have made him tractable. "'Tis not in the classics," he muttered; "ye may walk through them without resistance . . . how then should there be a mutilation? . . . I cannot see." . . .

This I set down in pity to his lunacy, and he continued to mutter fragments. "A mischance to the mortal remains . . . but the hinds in yonder vault were too terrified . . . and then, what correspondence . . . *I tell ye, sir, ye*

know nothing . . . why does it not reunite ? ” . . .

And as he chattered thus, I wondered that I, who dreaded no spectre, should dread exceedingly the mind that could so conjure one up.

On the morrow I again sought Watt the keeper ; I had now a purpose, and as he packed hampers in a flat-bottomed boat he again sought to ward off my questions.

“ What did he mean by mutilation ? You said nothing to me,” I demanded ; and “ Ye didn’t ask me,” Watt replied ; “ —come, Bess ! ”

“ And what’s this about a vault ? ”—“ Ay, that’ll be th’ vault i’ th’ churchyard,” he answered ; “ ye’ll find th’ door there yet, all red wi’ rust and green wi’ verdigris.”

“ Don’t fool me,” I cried ; and with that the keeper turned fairly on me.

“ So ye willn’t let it bide ? Very well.—There’s little gossip i’ Skelf-Mary now, by reason o’ there being few folk, but I’ll be rid o’ what I know. They say it’ll be Eustace he sees, that was a priest ; but ye needn’t tak’ that fro’ me. When he had th’ vault oppened he asked this and that and t’other, and if he says th’ men was flayed, he’s right.—They couldn’t sort out which were which—ye understand—and th’ breed’s as ugly living as dead to my way o’ thinking. He talked about nowt but ‘ knees ’ . . . faugh ! Whose knees he wanted ye know as much as me ; but th’ sexton lives ower

at Windlesea. Mysel', I'm a decent wed man, and tak' no count o' ghosts and such, ye understand?" . . .

And Watt's way of thinking being a good deal my own, I troubled him no further. But, busy as I was, I had found time within three days to see the sexton (who, professionally, had little reluctance), and had pieced roughly together this delusion of the afflicted Master's. I know not whether it was Eustace who walked the library. That to all intents and purposes his mind conjured up some figure I was as convinced as I was that I myself should never see it. It has been enough for me that, looking where he looked, I have seen but air, while he has seen, stumping across a floor of boards, a shape on thighs that were broken midway.

And with this I come to my own confounding.

III.

My own apartment was one that had been made in the vaulting of the chapel by the insertion of a ceiling ; and this ceiling or floor, having no under-drawing, but consisting simply of planks laid athwart the baulks, was little hindrance to the passage of sound. I now did most of my work here, and it was now my turn to hear him babbling half the night beneath me. Many times I could have raged to hear him ; but, my wages being good, my own folly, had I quitted his service, would scarce have been less than his, and I began to welcome as a diversion each journey to Kingston or Beverley, where I had to consult with agents and lawyers.

For a good part of the estate was like to be well disposed of, and I had negotiations in hand for the fishing and shooting of the Decoy. Also, with the estate charged with the cost of proper draining, there was no bad prospect of farming, water-carriage being excellent and cheap. Now and then, for form, I went to see the Master in his bed ; but the doctor and the servant knew more of his condition than I, and it was only afterwards that I

learned how suddenly and alarmingly he had altered for the worse.

The Christmas Eve of that year I remember better than I wish. There was frost enough in the air to set the fires burning brightly, and to give to the stars a wonderful keenness; and so exhilarating was the night that I had taken a walk, returning by way of the forsaken village. But, home again, I noticed as I crossed the courtyard that an unusual number of lights were burning, and with a vague apprehension I made haste to enter.

The Master lay rigid on the bed, and the servant bathed his temples from a kitchen-vessel of vinegar; but it was less of vinegar than of a surgeon that he stood in need. It was useless to address him, seeing how his eyes again were; but when, coherently, though in a very weak voice, he spoke to me, it flashed upon me what had happened. He had, as I take it, strained the muscles of them, and was now cramped so; and even as I stood in awe of the stroke, gazing on the harpy-face, he made as if to point with his finger, and fell back in a fit with a horrid noise of gargling in his throat.

The doctor was due on the morrow, and I arranged with the servant watch and watch for the night. He took the first, and I retired to bed without undressing, and fell into a broken sleep.

I think the noise as of blows with a hammer must have mingled with some dream I had, for although I was conscious of it I did not readily

awake. Then I heard a cry. It was midnight by my watch, and I sprang from my bed and hurried to the library. As I set my hand to the rosewood door it was flung open, and the servant, blubbering like a child, all but embraced me. I pushed past him, and stopped.

Six feet within, in a huddle of blankets on the floor, lay the form of the Master of Skelf; I had to glance at the empty bed to realise it. One taper was overturned by his side, but the other showed the heavy poker that had been the cause of the knocking. The servant moaned that he had not dozed—had not dozed; but I know not how else the Master could have found opportunity, as he had found strength in his extremity (acting on who knows what revelation of his mad brain) to rise from his bed, reach the other end of the library, and to prise up a plank from the floor. Into the opening he had made his arm was plunged to the shoulder. I saw at once that he was dead; then I took the taper and peered down into the hole.

I withdrew his arm and composed his body; then deliberately I set to work to pull up the adjoining plank. It came half way up with a harsh noise, and the rusty nails bent and held it so; and all at once the poker fell from my hand, a violent shiver passed through me, and I found myself gazing stupidly at the older floor that lay a couple of feet beneath.





LAD-LASS.

THE white walls of the farmhouse were hot and blinding to look upon in the sunlight, and the row of scoured dairy-pans and vessels that leaned against them blazed in spots like the sun himself. The hills across the narrow Dale quivered in the June afternoon as if seen over a furnace of charcoal, and no sounds were heard but the soft clucking of poultry and the heavy droning of the bees as they spun in and out of the bass-hives. The sky was of a bleached blue; the dripping from the spout of the pump dried where it fell on the baked earth; the smell of hay and hot dust filled the air; and in the grey limestone village lower down the valley not a soul was to be seen abroad.

Harriet Stubbs stood in her dairy at an upright churn. The lime-washed walls glowed with imprisoned sunlight, and only a narrow strip of shade lay without the door. She was six-and-thirty, too tall, too thin, too quick-moving. Rusty freckles gathered thickly over the bridge of her

nose and spread over a face that was of the hue of washleather. Her lips had no red ; the lower one was dented with an old frost-bite, now healed ; and over the upper one a few straggling hairs showed. Her arms as she churned were sinewy as those of a man ; and her bluntly-lidded grey eyes were searching and shrewish.

A rank whiff of tobacco came on the hot air, and a man of fifty crossed the bright yard and entered the dairy. She did not stop churning.

"Put that pipe out, Henry Butler ; I'll ha' no reek i' my dairy," she cried ; "I had a kern o' butter as rank as owd hippins last week wi' one o' yon gormless wenches settin' a stinkin' cheese o' th' shelf ; th' De'il himself couldna watch some o' ye.—An' what brings ye up fro' th' Cotes ?"

"I put a owd apron ower th' horse's head an' rade up," said the farmer, mopping his brow with an old snuff-handkerchief ; "it's blistering hot !"

"If ye cam' thro' th' Cotes to tell me that I'm obliged to ye, but I kenned it, thank ye."

"Nay, I come for a bit crack wi' ye, Harriet, aboot yon lad o' mine."

"Ay ?—Tak' a turn at th' kern, for ye could wring my shift."

The farmer took the poss-stick in his knotted hands, and she mopped her freckled brow with her apron ; then she sat a-straddle on the corner of the stone table and said : "what's wrang wi' Harry ?"

“Wrang?” said the farmer, making the churn rock with his energy. “And what should be wrang wi’ short o’ ane-and-twenty but ye perdition women?”

“Ay,” said Harriet composedly, “we’re winsome things, an’ ye canna resist us; not that I’ve seen ye sweat overmuch wi’ trying. Is’t——?”

“Ay, is’t: yon black-haired besom, Bessie Wyatt; but th’ sullen trash is packing to-neet.”

“Packin’! An’ what’s Harry say?”

Farmer Butler scowled out over the hot stack-yard.

“’Tis what I cam’ to talk to ye aboot.—Now i’ one word, Harriet: wad ye ha’ him?”

A little blood came into her dry cheeks.

“Ha’ him? Dost mean wed him?”

“Ay, and join the farms—there wadna be another property like it this side o’ Pateley Brigg.”

“He’s not sent thee?—Not he,” she said sourly; “I’d liefer he did his own courtin’.”

The farmer churned angrily, and she watched him keenly.

“Then by ——, he shall,” he cried, “or I’ll sell out and build a kirk!”

“Th’ Butlers’ll build a lot o’ kirks,” she remarked drily. “Wad I ha’ him? Well, I’ll answer him that when he asks me; but I’ll answer ye this now, Henry: They say th’ De’il likes to muck o’ a gurt lump, an’ th’ twa farms wad mak’ a pretty property; but a bonnie thing ’twad

be to hear th' love he'd whisper to th' flawpin' Lad-lass Harriet Stubbs! 'My own four-hundred acre! My darlin' twenty-score head o' beasts! My lovely farm an' house an' first mortgage o' three rows o' cottages i' Pateley Town!' A bonnie wooin'!—When he whispered 'Bessie!' at th' side o' me at neet I'd say; 'Tisna Bessie, love; 'tis thy precious ninety pund a year i' th' bank; kiss thy owd Skipton market; kiss thy butter an' eggs; kiss thy bit o' horse-trade!' A pretty wooin'!—Happen I'd see him lookin' yonderly-like i' th' chimley-corner, thinkin' why I didna bring him a bairn; I'd say, 'There's young blood an' bairns enow; we'll adopt one, an' thou can call it Bessie.'—Tch!—'Tis naughbut ye owd nontkates that thinks all women's th' same i' th' dark! Wadna I ken? Wadna I ken when I were his Bessie? Wadna I brak my heart, bein' his Bessie? Wadna I brak all three o' we'r hearts?—Not I, as it chances, for I'm any kind o' a fool but that kind, so get thy kirk built, Henry. They ha'na named me Lad-lass for naught."

"Thou doesna ken right what thou's sayin'," said the farmer.

"No? So we live and learn, but I thought I did," she replied imperturbably. "Now thou's had thy bit crack, an' there'll be a mug o' ale for thee at th' loupin'-stane.—When wilt call an' mak love o' thy own account, Henry? 'Twad be a rare thing to be wed i' your ain kirk."

The farmer passed out, and she turned to the churn again.

The butter would not come, and now and then she muttered a man's oath. The strip of shade outside the door became narrower as the sun crept round. A burnished cock mounted a fence and shrilled out a call that rang over the hot valley, and she unbuttoned her bodice at the throat and fumed.

Suddenly the figure of a girl appeared in the doorway.

She was heavily, moodily handsome, and her coal-black hair escaped from a cotton bonnet that had been pink but was now almost white with washing and exposure to the sun. Her lad's clogs were white with dust, her round arms were brown and bare above the elbow, and her dark beauty showed brilliantly in the cool light of the dairy.

"I ha' come to say good-bye, Miss Stubbs," she said timidly; "I leave to-night."

Harriet pursed her faded, cracked lips, and blinked her eyes at the other's shrinking loveliness.

"And thou's come to say good-bye to me? Well, God grant we may al'ays ha' more friends nor we ken; I thank ye."

"I'm Bessie Wyatt, an' I've slipped out unknown o' purpose to see ye."

"An' that's a jade's trick, dodgin' th' last o' your wark instead of straightenin' up for them that's to follow ye."

"'Tis what I wad do—straighten up for her that's to follow me—wi' Harry."

The last words were almost inaudible, and Harriet Stubbs let go the poss-stick.

"My garters, but here's a coil about this Harry to-day! First his father wi' his kirk-building, an' then a milkin'-wench comin' to say good-bye to neist to a stranger!—How'st mean, to follow ye wi' Harry?"

Bessie's bosom rose rapidly.

"An' if a milkin'-wench makes bold for once wi' th' mistress o' her own house an' lands, 'tis that I ha' lile time to waste. Miss Stubbs, ye'll be—oh!—ye'll be kind to him!" She buried her face in her sleeve against the white wall, and Harriet, bewildered, seized the poss-stick again.

"Is th' lass gane daft? Here's another doin' thy courtin' for thee, Harriet; thou'll dee a wed woman yet, th' next earthquake or th' next after that.—Now, thou foolish wench, when thou's done greetin' happen thou'll gi'e thy tongue a chance?"

"I am na' greetin'," said the girl, raising her big eyes that were quite dry, "an' I'll tell ye i' four words. He wad ha' borne me off to Rigg village, i' Scotland, where Davie Laing th' blacksmith weds 'em for a crown; but I wadna. He maun wed wi' his father's goodwill, if it braks my heart; an' I ken who that is. 'Twad be a sin to lo'e him, another's; I winna think mair o' him, an' I'll see him na mair."

Harriet bent her eyes on her.

"So that's it? Thou's like Joss Tait, th' cobbler, who says fowk's welcome to what he doesn't want. I'm obliged to ye, Miss Elizabeth Wyatt.—Why, thou hussy," she broke out suddenly, but she looked away from Bessie, "hast th' face to come here wi' thy handin's-on? Daur ye tell me I canna choose where I like? D'ye tell me I'm six-and-thirty, an' ha' packthread o' my lip, an' maun be thankful for what I can get?—Ay, but I ken Harry Butler better nor ye, an' he's a bonnie 'un to ken—a bonnie 'un to ken!"

"Ye ken na wrang o' him!" the girl said, flashing her handsome eyes suddenly.

"Tch, ye baggage, dinna tell me what I ken, chance I fetch ye a thwack wi' th' poss-stick! I maun tak' ower thy cast-off an' be kind to him! —Are his kisses o' thy lips this day?"

"Ay, are they!" the girl replied proudly, "an' wad they were branded there wi' a coal if I could remember him th' longer for it!"

Harriet winced, and fixed her shrewish eyes on Bessie.

"So that's thy forgettin' him that's another's! Well, I bless th' Lord for every freckle I've got, for ye red and black witches, good men losses their heads at th' blink o' th' de'il i' your een! Scotland! Are ye na feared o' Rebecca an' her Sweepin's, then?"

"I'd ha' feared naught; but 'tis ower."

"Nor th' men-women ye mought meet at any Pike?"

"I'd ha' feared naught; but I'm leavin' him."

"An' ye cam to say good-bye to me?"

Bessie turned half away, and spoke over her shoulder.

"Ay, an' to tell one that I thought were a woman that which if onnybody told it to me wad ha' been gentler ta'en, an' happen a tear betwixt th' two on us."

Harriet laughed a short, dry laugh.

"I kenned it when I saw ye come in, bairn; an' now here's a makkin' o' butter settled an' spoiled. Nay, nay; ye cam' to gi'e me naught; ye cam' to greet o' this bosom o' mine, if I naughbut had one. Well, greet, bairn.—Thou fool!" she whispered, as Bessie laid her cheek, sobbing, on her flat breast, "up-saddle to-neet, an' off wi' him! De'il tak' me, he lo'es thee; up-saddle an' off! Rebecca wadna mell on ye; 'tis for the poor fowk she sweeps—th' poor fowk that bides at home an' pays under th' Pike Act for th' roads that th' rich gads about on. Has—has he said he lo'es ye?"

"Ay, a thousand times!" Harriet closed her eyes for a moment.

"Then, up an' off, wer't i' thy sark! Harry wad never ha' had me, e'en if I'd ha' had him; I'm naughbut an owd shoe to fling at others' weddings;

I'm up an' off, to-neet, Bessie ; 'tis odds a blacksmith can weld as strong a hoop as a parson ! ”

* * * * *

The hot June night had fallen two hours back, and the full moon bathed a dozen dales in a soft brilliance. The hills swam in mysterious shadows, and not a breath stirred the tall field-flowers in the meadows. Now and then the cry of a night-jar was heard or that of a corn-crake ; and now and then a tree would seem to sigh gently of itself in the still night. The road, of a silver-grey, dipped and wound and disappeared, reappearing a mile or two ahead where it crept over the shoulder of some moonlit moss.

The young man drove the quick-trotting mare in the trap with his right hand, and his left held the girl. Her face was heavy with drowsiness. From time to time she glanced at the trees and fields and shapes of hill and dale in the dreamy moonlight ; and as they passed under the dark hawthorn hedges she murmured : “ Th' flowers looks like spirits How far are we now, love ? ”

“ Yon's Newton Moss, an' ower it Lang Preston. We'se be at Litton Pike i' an hour, an' Horton by day-leet. We'll put up i' Sedbergh till to-morn th' neet.—What is't, love ? ”

She drew closer to him.

“ I tell'd Harriet I wadna be feared, but Rebecca dresses i' women's clothes, an' blacks her face, an'

burns yetts an' toll-houses.—Hark ! Dost hear naught at th' back o' us ? ”

“ Again, my precious ! Nay, there's naught ; an' I doubt Rebecca wadna sweep as far as Litton. True, she might ; she's busy these nights ; but 'tis time enow to meet trouble when it meets ye. Sitha ; thou can see into Lancashire ; yon's Pendle.”

The girl took a sharp breath at the sight of the great valley on the left flooded with moonlight, and at the dim mountain rising fifteen miles away ; then she pressed close to Harry and said : “ I'se gan to sleep awhile ; I can scarce keep my een open.”

“ Then sleep, sweetheart.”

He kissed her, and she slept almost immediately. Slowly the moon touched the summit of her arc and began to decline ; the hour of midnight came faintly over the hills from some distant church-tower ; and the mare sped tirelessly along the road towards Litton Turnpike.

* * * * *

The setting moon showed no more than half her shape over the crest of Litton Wood, and the old grey stone village under the Brow was lost in night. No sound broke the profound stillness of the Dale, not so much as the rustle of a stalled beast nor the moving of a bird in its nest ; and the Bear lay low over the dark fell across the valley. The single stroke of a bell broke from

the church belfry, pealed, spread away and failed over the Dale as ripples spread over a still pond ; and the silence closed in again.

A faint confused noise, a mile and more away, arose, hardly audible at first. Slowly the noise drew nearer, and snatches of singing could be heard, and a dull thumping on a drum or tub. As it swelled and drew still nearer a light appeared in an upper window, and a man's head was pushed forth from the casement. Candles showed in other windows ; more heads appeared ; single voices could now be distinguished in the approaching hubbub ; and a street door was thrown open and a man in his shirt and trousers shouted : " Th' Rebeccas ! "

In ten minutes three-score men had swarmed up the village street.

You would hardly have known they were men save by their voices. Their faces were hideously smeared with soot, all but their eyelids, which showed grotesquely white when they blinked. They wore the petticoats of women, gaping, fastened with belts or hitched up with string, and they carried lighted lanterns. Half of them bore faggots on their shoulders, other brooms of rush and twig. They thumped on tubs, sang doggerel songs, and whooped up at windows ; and at the clamour they made many of the Litton folk retired within their houses, barring the doors and watching the commotion from the windows.

"Mun t' poor mak rooads for t' rich to use?" a voice bawled; and in a kind of droning sing-song came a chorus of "Sweep, Rebecca, Sweep!"

Their feet caught in their skirts as they capered, and some had rolled their petticoats about their waists, showing their men's legs beneath. Some had shawls tied over their head, others bonnets; and they lighted pipes at the lanterns. A big fellow demanded the name of the toll-keeper.

"'Tis Matthy Lee, an owd man," a piping voice replied. "What gars Rebecca sweep so far fro' hame?"

"Shoo'll sweep fro' here to London Town afore shoo sets t' broom back i' t' corner.—I wish there were more wind; a bit o' breeze mak's a merry sweepin'."

"Eh, all's as dry as kin'lin'-wood this weather. Which is t' road?"

"This road; step out, lads."

The leaders set off through the village towards the pike that lay a little way beyond it. The others followed; the singing sounded fainter and fainter down the road, and a few of the Litton men, half dressed, walked after them at a distance.

The single-storied, white-painted toll-house was in darkness, and the white bar-gate glimmered across the road. The dancing lanterns and the singing drew near it, and the hubbub roused the old pike-keeper, who unbarred his door and peered forth, his nightcap on his head. He had lighted a candle, and his nutcracker face showed scared

in the light of it. "The Lord save us!" he said tremblingly; and then the begrimed faces of the Rebeccas, their white eyelids blinking ludicrously, swarmed at the pike.

"Gate! Gate!" they bawled; "three score noblemen's come to pay their gatecloys!" and one fellow shouted: "If thou wants to save thy bits o' sticks, owd man, out wi' 'em into th' road!"

"My garden! My garden!" the old man whimpered. "Dinna walk ower my garden!"

They laughed. He was thrust aside, and a dozen men climbed the gate and poured into the toll-house. They began to strip walls, to tear up matting, to bundle out bed and bedding, tables and chairs, and pans, and crockery. Others set faggots against the bar-gate, the wooden window-shuts, and the fuel-shed at the back of the house; and the old man sat among his chattels in the road and moaned: "My garden, my garden!"

Soon every faggot was disposed, and the men stood round.

"Ready?" they cried; and fire was laid to the twigs and faggots in a dozen places at once.

* * * * *

"Listen!" said Bessie Wyatt fearfully; "I'm sure there's wheels at th' back o' us, Harry—I ha' heard 'em this half-hour!"

"Ay, I hear 'em," Harry replied grimly; "but th' mare's doin' th' best she can, an' it's what's afore us that's troublin' me, sitha!"

She caught her breath.

"Yon's never th' dawn, Harry ! "

"Not wi'out th' dawn's come i' th' north for once," he muttered. "Come up, then, Polly ! "

The mare sprang more quickly forward at the trailing of the whiplash over her quarters, and the dark hedges made a long blur on either hand. The odd brightness rose and sank over the distant fell.

"Rebecca afore, an' th' father ahint," he said to himself, "an' we canna hide th' trap ; we maun chance it. Come up, Polly !—Hark !—Ay, yon's Beeswing ; I ken her trot ; thou canna leave Beeswing, Polly, poor lass ; we can but go forrard. Polly's my own, but I ha' borrowed th' trap. Come closer, Bess."

"Oh, Harry, ha' a care ; we were a'most i' th' dike then ! Sitha, how th' hills swing !—Yon leet's growin' breeter."

"We'se see at th' next turn," he said between his teeth.

"Ho'd me close."

Again he touched the mare ; the sombre fell seemed to close in on them, and then to open out again into a further fold. The luminousness ahead grew brighter, and an outlying barn flashed past. They took the dip at Litton village and the rise on the other side without a check ; two of the trap wheels left the ground at the turn, touching again twenty yards further on ; the light leaped ; they saw the blazing toll-bar and the figures that

moved about it; and Harry muttered, "We can but go forrard—nay, we maun stop. I could ha' ta'en yon burnin' yett alone, but wi' lass and trap—we're done!"

He drew up within a dozen yards of the blazing toll-house.

"Where are ye for?" the shape of a woman demanded, laying a man's hand on the bridle.

"Horton—Sedbergh—Carlisle. For God's sake, fling yon yett back!"

"Wi' whose leave?"

"Th' leave o' Rebecca—aught—oppen th' yett! 'Tisna th' likes o' us ye want to keep. We're poorer nor ye, an' followed. Fling th' yett back, an' let's be on!"

The man looked the vehicle up and down.

"A tidy trap an' mare for a poor man! Followed, are ye? Down ye get, both on ye—a lass, begow! We're that mony lasses to-neet a man gits mixed ameng 'em.—Followed, are ye? I'm none so capped at that; poor men doesn't drive traps an' mares like yon; we arena thieves.—Tak' th' mare out."

The mare was fastened to a tree, and Harry—Bessie wide-eyed at his side—watched the spectacle. Cattle gazed over walls, and moths and buzzards fluttered here and there. The ceiling-baulks of the toll-house bulged beneath the weight of the flagged roof, and the red glare of the fire lighted the filthy faces on which the sweat had trickled

and run into the soot. Sparks and flame streamed straight upwards, and a fierce crackling mingled with the shouts of the men. The old toll-keeper on his heap of furniture held his head in his hands and moaned, "My garden, my garden!"

"'Tis awful!" said Bessie, shuddering and pressing closer to Harry.

Suddenly a dozen voices burst forth in a cry of "Heigh, there—stop!" The man who had spoken to Harry turned to him and said, "Yon's som'b'dy after a trap an' mare"; and Farmer Butler roared, "D—— ye, hands off! Where is he?"

"Rebecca hes him, same as shoo hes thee," somebody replied; and Farmer Butler and Harriet Stubbs descended from the trap. Harriet's sharp eyes scanned the rabble eagerly; they met Harry's; and while the men-women gathered about Butler with questions she slipped quickly to his side.

"I couldna' set him wrang—there's naughbut one road—ye's get awa' yet," she said low and rapidly. "De'il be good to us, what a seet!—Get ye amang th' villagers yonder, Harry, an' dinnat be seen; I'se manage for ye. Can th' mare carry th' two o' ye a post or so? Awa', an' dinnat be seen. Wait for me yonder, an' dinnat let him see ye . . . Now, Henry, her's ane o' 'em, an' t'ither winna be far off."

"Bide ye wi' this unskelped hussy while I find him!" cried the farmer.

"Nay—I spy him!" said Harriet. "Yonder he is!" She darted off, and mingled with the men. Her eyes shone, and she seemed to set herself to some effort.

A huge fellow barred her way.

"Where for, i' such a hurry?" and she broke into a shrill laugh.

"My ain gait, my owd love—kiss thy Nancy!" She took the man's bleared face between her hands, and set her own cheek against it.

"Out, ye trollop!"

"An' out yoursel', ye greasy muck-slut; tch, ye filthy dozen! Here's my man.—Doady, come, let's shak' a leg, Doady! Wilt dance wi' thy Nancy? 'Shak' it a little, a little, a little. An' turn ye roundabout!' " she sang, and flung her arms about another fellow. "Nay, thou's be-slubbered my face, chuck; never heed; ain muck's sweet, an' thou's my ain Charlie; a kiss, now! Sink, but we're as threng as three i' a bed! Hey, my bonnie black boys!" She turned this way and that among the men, making herself outrageous; and then she slipped out of the ring and sought Harry.

She found him, hidden from the leaping of the fire behind the old pike-keeper's heap of furniture.

"Whatever are ye doin' here, Harriet?" he whispered.

"Tch! Dinnat waste a minute," she replied hoarsely; "come, thy face. There's th' muck

o' a dozen greasy rascals here," she chattered, as she besmirched him. "I'll lend thee brass for another trap i' Horton—whisht! ye gormless fool; tak' it an' owe it! I ha' scarce grime enow; we maun mak' it do. Faugh, what a stock-pot it is! But 'tis worth a crown a scrape. Lig thy cheek agen mine, Harry.—There, there, twa seconds; all th' muck we can!" He felt how she trembled throughout her frame. "Now thou's foul enow for hell-kitchen.—O my heart!—Come, don this, quick!"

Her hands fumbled at her waist, and she thrust a petticoat down hurriedly. He stared like a wittol.

"Dinnat stand there gapin' like a throttled cat; step into 't, an' put this about thy shoulders. De'il tak' me if th' Lad-lass isna mair a man nor onny o' em! But woman maist: O Harry!—Awa' wi' thee now! I'll go smear Bessie, an' ye maun off o' th' mare. Here's brass—an' bless ye!"

She was off with her hand at her breast.

"Where is he?" the farmer roared. He was at Harry's elbow, but did not recognise him; and Harriet drew Bessie towards the tree where the mare stood, and fouled her face. "Up ye get; leave room for him i' front; he can swing up by th' branch. Nay, he'd best lead her ower by yon pasture." Bessie flung her arms about Harriet's neck.

"Oh, Harriet!" she said chokingly; "whether we get awa' or not, how I lo'e thee!"

“Ho’d thy whisht; dinnat begin to be a fool now! He’ll hire a trap i’ Horton; ye’ll be i’ Sedbergh to-morn; nay, to-day, for sitha at th’ hills yonder. I’ll tak’ th’ linchpins out o’ both traps. Here, rub this bit o’ earth on, an’ tee th’ han’kercher round thy chin! And now kiss me afore I go find him.—Th’ hengments! What’s yon?”

A sudden new roaring and crackling had broken forth from the toll-house. The roof stones had crashed through the burnt baulks, and from the standing walls fountains of fire and sparks shot high into the sky, as if from a huge Jack-in-the-box. The rioters shouted and danced madly, the old pike-keeper looked up with a dazed look, and the birds hopped in the illuminated trees. “Now I’ll send him, while that’s amusin’ ’em,” Harriet muttered; she pressed Bessie’s hand—all of her she could reach—against her cheek for a moment; then she disappeared among the shouting crowd.

* * * * *

The hills in the east were revealed against the grey sky. A light breeze drifted the smoke from the toll-house in the direction of Litton village, and the glow shone luridly on the rolling masses. A cock gave a rousing call, and was answered from farm to farm throughout the grey dale. “Barnaby Bright, longest day an’ shortest night,” a farmer muttered; and russet frets appeared over the hills. The fire burned down, and the embers glowed through a white ash. The Rebeccas were gathered

together for departure; and Harriet Stubbs, a grimy, ungainly figure, in a short under-petticoat that revealed her sharp tibias, stood a little apart and watched a man in a woman's attire who led a horse with a figure upon it quietly round by a wall and down a pasture to the open northward road. Farmer Butler was cursing here and there, and shouting, "Harriet! Harriet Stubbs!"

The high hills to the east showed a vast and mysterious shape, with an edge that burned. The two figures on the mare waved their hands to Harriet, and disappeared down the road. For many minutes she stood gazing after them; the birds twittered loudly; and then she laughed her short hard laugh.

"A Lad-lass to some purpose!" she muttered. "An' his cheek were agen mine. O my love!—De'il tak' me, I'm whinin' again! Get thy face washed, Harriet Stubbs, an' seek a house an' mak' a decent woman o' thyself, an' cover them shallacky ankles, for thou's a offald thing i' th' dayleet. Speed ye, Harry! Happen he'll call th' bairn Harriet—or Harry—th' Lad-lass wad serve for ather—an' 'tis better nor calling mine Bessie.—Now I'll find Henry."

The sky flamed in hues of amber and coral, and she turned again to where the last of the Rebeccas were departing from the ruins of the toll-house.



THE FAIRWAY.

EXCEPT that he called the gipsies the "Johnnie Faws," there was little of the rustic in his speech ; and as he told the tale we seemed to see them, these Johnnie Faws, coming down the hill on that wild January forenoon. They did not come by the Portsannet road—it would have passed mortal eyes to find a road in the whirl and scurry and drift of white he described—but spread out like pheasant-beaters, crying one to another in the Romany, sometimes flung forward by the tempest, sometimes huddled down and covered over almost entirely by the snow. Perhaps the fact that he had been a schoolmaster accounted for an occasional positiveness in his manner,—it seems to remain with schoolmasters to the end of their days,—and he was an old man, who must be let talk after his own fashion. He told us how the wind swept out the tracks of the Johnny Faws behind them, and how the South Ness women looked compassionately on their wilder sisters, who did not cover their

breasts once in ten years, but who had sought refuge from the storm, as the hares and foxes had done before them; and then he wandered off again, schoolmaster-wise, to tell us how the footprints of a fox over the snow made but a single line, and how a hare would lie at form, and what sort of tracks a robin made. . . . By and by he took up his tale again.

“—So we knew it was bad when the Johnnie Faws came down. Queer people—dark, whipcord-looking fellows, and one singularly handsome woman, very swarthy and black-eyed. I remember our women looked at her as if—as if—but our women lived in houses, you see. . . . Well, first of all we asked them about the *Lizzie Martin*; but they’d never heard of her. Was she a South Ness boat? they asked. Next we asked them if there was much snow on the Heights; and they answered, No; the Heights were swept clean, but a man could not stand upright there for the wind. No snow was falling, they told us; all was being whirled up from the ground again, dry and powdery. There was one fellow they called Nunan. He carried a knife and wore gold earrings and talked in a shrill, eager voice; and he told us how up there the white world and the pale apple-green sky was one brilliant intermingling that spun and sparkled in the cold sunlight and smoked. . . . We asked them where they had left their horses. It seemed they’d dug a way for them under

what looked like the lee of an old quarry, in an immense drift: they would weather it as best they could, as sheep do.

"The Johnnie Faws moved restlessly up and down the village; but most of them gathered at the 'Dotterel,' though they drank nothing. The greater part of the time they were silent, but occasionally they all talked at once in their own tongue; and I dare say we shouldn't have had any tidings of Portsannet at all if the group about the door of the 'Dotterel' hadn't quarrelled, or seemed to. It was something about a slipper-brake. It appeared that one of their men, Osa Couper, had turned down into Portsannet earlier in the day, before the storm had got quite so bad, to get a new hook or rivet for this brake. He had promised to overtake them; but (they said) somewhere over yonder—over the Heights—a man with a pair of long wooden runners on his feet (it was Andrews, we learned afterwards, mate of an old Norwegian timber-barque, turned farmer)—Andrews—had suddenly appeared among them from nowhere in particular,—just dropped in on them from out of the smothering white, and had advised them to avoid the shelter of the hollows: the hollows, you see, were drifted, but the short brown grass showed on the tops. Then Andrews had reported that a tall, Egyptian-looking fellow had flung himself into the Portsannet boat as she had put forth for the second time that morning; and

then all at once the Johnnie Faws had missed him. He had seemed to vanish while they had all thought he was talking to Osa Couper's woman yonder. . . . Of course we asked again if it was the *Lizzie Martin* they had put out for; but they didn't know.

"You know what South Ness is like,—houses at all levels, and how you can step from the door of Broadwood's house yonder almost on to the 'Dotterel' chimneys. Well, if the Heights were swept, we had the sweepings. We were blocked with snow up to the chamber windows,—the bedroom windows,—and there was right of way through anybody's yard or passage or kitchen that was convenient. I remember it interested me (perhaps it won't interest you) the way the wind seemed to have been deflected from the houses in a sort of backwash. It had made great scoops and trenches, ten foot high and clean-cut at the edges, as if shaped in marble; and men and women passed up and down these trenches. These cliffs, as you might call them, darkened the interiors of the cottages; and the wind hooted in the chimneys just as lads blow across the barrel of a key. Farmers with shovels, frozen over white as snow men, returned from digging out their cattle, but the fishermen idled moodily. The cobbles and smacks tossed down in the harbour; but the wind drowned most noises except that of the surf away out on the Spit, and

that was like continuous explosions. This was only midday, you know, but you could see nothing but white—white; bits of ice like diamonds on your lashes; and here and there a bit of blue or apple-green sky, all tossed together. I thought I had never seen anything so wild and beautiful; but then, I hadn't a *Lizzie Martin* out. . . .”

“*Lizzie Martin*—the woman, not the boat—kept the ‘Dotterel.’ She was a pleasant body, plump (when she was twelve or thirteen she had one of these creases round her neck that means a double chin later on), and she was very honest and comfortable and motherly, though she hadn't a child—just then. About two o'clock three of the gipsies had come into the ‘Dotterel,’—four, if you reckon the babe at the handsome woman's breast,—and they sat over by the snowed-up window. There would be a dozen or so men round the hearth; but nobody was drinking, and nobody said anything in *Lizzie's* presence about what we'd heard of this *Osa Couper* and the *Portsannet* boat, you understand. Now and then the child gave a little throaty cry, and once or twice *Willie Harverson*—he was a young giant, and his curly head always looked too little for his shoulders when he'd got his two or three winter ganseys on,—*Willie* had told her to bring the child nearer the fire. But she had only shaken her head and pointed behind her at the window. The panes had warmed a little, and the snow had peeled a

couple of inches from them and then frozen again. Except for that narrow gleam of cold light, you'd have thought it was evening, for the candles were lighted, and they swealed and guttered every time the door opened. The gipsy woman had opened her breast again,—a sort of sling to carry the babe passed across it,—and she looked straight before her, like a handsome statue, a beautiful animal—like everything else in nature except this self-conscious creature man. . . . I can't tell you ; never mind. . . .

“Willie told her again to come near the fire, and then up piped Nunan in his high, eager voice. She'd do there till her man came back from Portsannet, he said (they didn't seem to doubt that he'd gone out with the boat). I remember Willie muttered, 'Christ rest his soul for a brave man if . . .' You see, the Portsannet boat was an old Greathead boat, nearly as old as the century, fit for chopping up for kindling any time this five-and-twenty years ; but ours at South Ness was a new, thirty-three-foot boat, mahogany, double-banked, self-emptying, self-righting, nearly seven hundred pounds with belts and tackle and carriage. She'd only been out twice, and there wasn't a scratch on her blue and white. John Broadwood was cox. I knew what John thought of their chances of getting round the Spit if they were to put out ; but they were so proud of the new boat that they were eager as lads to try it. Men were

watch and watch about down at the boathouse, where they could see if Reuben Ward signalled from the station on the hill ; but it wasn't our day. With the wind due north, if a boat cleared Portsannet Head she cleared the Spit too. It was Portsannet's turn, and the old boat's. . . .

"The men in the 'Dotterel' then were talking about the boat, when suddenly I heard John Broadwood say 'Whisht !' Lizzie stood there in the doorway, under a model of a brig in a glass case there used to be. 'Did some of ye call ?' she said ; and the men shuffled their feet and shifted about on stools and benches.—'We told ye not to bother, Lizzie,' Broadwood says ; 'we'll wait on we'rsels.'—'It must ha' been the babe I heard,' says Lizzie ; 'let her bring it near th' fire, Willie.' But the woman said again that she'd do till Osa Couper came ; and Lizzie asked Nunan if he wasn't her husband."

He paused ; and when in a minute he resumed again, there was the same magisterial, slightly querulous note in his voice that we had heard before—the schoolmaster's note.

"Before we go further, let's understand one another," he said. "When I said that Nunan had a knife, I saw some of you anticipating—making ready—saying to yourselves, Ah ! knives mean stabbing ; never mind your comments ;

come to the tale and the knife !—Well, you're wise in your day and generation, but for all that I think you're a little wrong too. The tale's a good deal, but the man who tells it is also something. I could show you Willie Harverson's house, and you'd gape round for five minutes with your caps in your hands, thinking—well, goodness knows what you'd be thinking ! You've seen 'em, perhaps, tourists, open-mouthed, in the room where somebody was born or died. To me it would always seem stupid if it weren't so comical. Facts are neither the most interesting nor the most important things in the world—not that sort of fact. The knife was a fact, and we're coming to the knife ; but it's a good deal like other things in life you look forward to—nothing when you get it. One of these new writers I don't pretend to understand says there are two tragedies in life—not getting what you want, and getting it. I know I used to think that if ever I became head of a decent grammar-school . . . well, I've been head of a grammar-school. When I'd got that I wanted something else ; and so on. And here I am, back again where I was born, with grammar-schools and suchlike all behind me. Garrulous too. . . . But tragedy or not, there's little satisfaction in getting things. You see, you don't drop dead in the perfect, glorious, fit moment when you attain 'em. Life goes on, a dull, stretched-out anti-climax ; and there seems to be only one

finish to it all. I'm an old man, and probably nearer it than you. . . .

"So when Lizzie asked Nunan if he wasn't the handsome gipsy's husband, there was John Broadwood shaking a great fist with a blue anchor on it over Lizzie's shoulder, and Willie making foolish shapes with his mouth without a sound, and Jemmy Wild hawking in his throat and knocking his pipe out noisily; . . . but Nunan popped out with it—about Osa and the guns at Portsannet, and so on—and then he spluttered out a 'Hey! Would ye do that, man?' You see, Willie had clapped his hand over his mouth, and there was a wicked gleam in Nunan's eyes, and his hand went to the small of his back where the knife was; and that's all about the knife, except that the woman told Nunan to sit still.

"But Lizzie was trembling pitifully; and when I saw her eyes go round the men I backed away behind the settle, so that somebody else might tell her. Then her head came down on her arms and thumped on the table, while Nunan sulked. We watched her broad back heaving; and then all at once she threw up her head. 'Oh, hear it goyling down th' chimley!' she cried; and I saw John Broadwood biting his pipe hard; 'Frank—Frank o' th' *Lizzie Martin*—ye were his mates, and here ye sit—he called her after me—she were Lizzie Martin afore I were—I were Lizzie Collison o' th' Heights——' . . . Broadwood bade her

Whisht ! whisht ! but she went on. 'It were a Valentine's day, a Thursday, and he came into th' kitchen that morning—Jess never barked when he came courting, but she'd never let him go without I took him to th' gate——' . . . And so on, young gentlemen. Lizzie and Frank had seen the valentine from the top of the hill, on the sea below, as if on a sheet of glass. 'Don't, Lizzie !' says Broadwood, choking ; 'we can't bide to hear ye !' . . .

"John Broadwood was a fine, independent, self-sufficient sort of fellow, with a good deal of John Broadwood about him altogether, but he broke down. Lizzie's eyes, wandering wildly, fell on the gipsy woman and the babe. The gipsy's husband, for anything we knew, was in peril too ; but I think it was something else that came over Lizzie—the sight of the child : I see you understand. She sobbed something—I didn't hear what—and the gipsy woman turned, quite unmoved, and looked at Lizzie from head to heel. 'I see your time's coming,' she said, 'and them that lives in chambers of stone need comfort ; come then.' And with that she moved the babe in the sling, and produced an old pack of cards. Strange folk. . . .

"They say symbols are what you take them for, or else a cross might just as well be a gallows, but those cards looked very secular to me. It was a grim, cheerless power that those were a

symbol of. I think Lizzie thought so too, for the sight of them seemed to bring her round a little. She knitted her fat fingers together on the gipsy's knee and sank to the floor. 'Nay, woman,' she said, 'we'll have a surer comfort than that, you and I;' and the woman glanced from the cards, as she cut and cut them, to Lizzie's head on her knee, incuriously. . . . I went out. I'd seen one or two of the men glancing at the door, as if they'd have liked to be on the other side of it; but I just walked out. I thought I'd take a walk—to see Reuben Ward at the station.

"Coming out of the candle-light, I blinked like a flittermouse. The sky was still a keen blue, with the snow whirling and glittering and dancing; but the light was dying, and I guessed it would be about half-past four—the hands of the school-house clock were fast frozen to its face. I turned up the blacksmith's alley to get a shovel: it was smooth to the eaves with snow, and little wisps and curls played on the surface like smoke. The wind was blowing big guns intermittently, and in the intervals I could hear the thunder of the Spit. I set out for the station, and in a dozen yards was up to my waist in a river of snow.

"There was a windmill before you came to the station. There's one yet, but it's a dummy—a sailing-mark for ships, and the Board of Trade looks after it. It worked in those days, and belonged to a fellow called Rhodes. I was a strongish

chap, you must know, not so tall as Willie Harverson, but as broad, or thereabouts ; but by the time I reached the mill I was glad enough of its shelter. And then I looked up, and backed away again. The sail-shutters were open, and the wind screamed through them ; but the gearing—all those cranks and elbows about the pin—that had gone ; and two or three blades of the steering-fan hummed like bits of ribbon in the wind. The whole thing had swung round like a weathercock, and the heavy top storey rocked and lifted, like a mouth opening and shutting. Underneath it a man was lying on his back in the snow, watching it as if it were a plaything.

“ I shook him and bawled in his ear. He didn’t speak. His face glittered all over with ice particles, and I knew who he would be by his hair and eyes. I dragged him out from under the toppling mill ; by his mouth I could make out that he was saying something about ‘ my people,’ and I nodded, and shouted, ‘ What about Portsannet ? ’

“ I made out a few words : ‘ Twice—oars broke—old boat—help.’ And then I asked, ‘ What about the station ? ’ It seemed Reuben was helpless. The mast and cones and drums had gone ; he’d been firing, but we hadn’t heard, and he was waiting for dark to signal with the rockets. ‘ D’ye know what boat ? ’ I shouted, putting my arm round his neck and my mouth at his ear ; and he tried two or three times to tell me, but had

lost his voice. He stooped down and wrote in the snow with his finger, 'SN, 102.' Seeing that that was the *Lizzie's* number, I didn't bother about Reuben and the station. I collared him, and off we blundered into the drifts between Rhodes's mill and South Ness.

"They were much as I'd left them when Osa and I got to the 'Dotterel.' The tall Johnnie Faw wouldn't touch brandy, I remember. The two women were not to be seen. I told them to stir themselves, and they were on their feet in an instant. John Broadwood, who had said she could never live round the Spit, was first at the door. 'Out o' the road, ye farmers !' he grunted ; and I was for telling Osa to go into the kitchen to his wife, when all at once I saw Lizzie in the doorway. 'Reuben's signalled, then ?' she said ; and somebody said 'Ay.' The gipsy woman didn't take her eyes off Osa, who was talking to Nunan in the Romany ; but she didn't speak."

He stopped for so long that we thought he wasn't going on again. It was minutes before he resumed ; but evidently he had got his digression over within himself, for he went straight on.

"There were lights and moving figures down by the boat-house, but they were blotted out from time to time : the night had fallen. The cobbles and craft were huddled close in, and they were

tossing and hissing and groaning—fenders grunting and rubbing on wood, blocks banging, tackle shrieking, parted ropes cracking like whips. . . .

The little jetty seemed to run out a yard or two into the night. The surf thundered out on the Spit, a deep solemn sound. A fellow was bawling through a trumpet: his voice sounded throttled, something like a bassoon. The moon wasn't due up for a couple of hours yet.

"We ran her down on the carriage,—men at the wheels and life-lines and at the horse's heads,—and then we stood in the knee-deep water to see her lift. She lifted, and every man flung himself headlong out of the way. She came up from the carriage in a monstrous cant, and then she came down broadside in the broken, boiling wave. I heard the snapping of the port oars,—it was a short crackle in the tempest,—and then I was thirty yards away, scrambling among the carriage and horses and men. A broken shaft danced up and down in the white backwash.

"We beached her by hand, and already the wheelwright had a wrench and was unscrewing the nuts of the broken shaft. We carried four men to the boathouse, two of them with their hands on their chests where the broken oars had caught them. Eh? Oh yes, they'd jackets on. . . . We tried again, waiting till the breaker had spread away roaring in the darkness, and she rose again. She seemed to hang for a dreadful long time

between the two crests of curling white that rushed together to meet her,—the wave was a slanting wall all laced over with a pattern of grey foam,—and then she disappeared. But she was on the wrong side still, and her rudder was smashed. A man struck at me as I dragged him out of the water: it was John Broadwood. I'd got hold of his right wrist, and it dangled when I let it go; so I took him by the other arm. We headed the horses round to try again, edging close under the shelter of the jetty and the plunging cobbles; and that time I turned my face away as she lifted—she was so frightfully near the jetty. But when I looked again, there she was. She'd neither ridden it nor got through it; and the Spit, booming a mile away, seemed to mock us that we couldn't get through the breakers.

“We all gathered in the boathouse again—farmers, fishermen, injured men, gipsies. Osa Couper was talking to old Joe Barker, and a fellow who was listening turned suddenly away and pulled out his pipe. That cut us—cut those who saw him: it seemed all there was to do—to light your pipe. And then we heard women's voices again: Lizzie and the gipsy woman were among us. What were we waiting for? they asked; and the man who was lighting his pipe nodded at the injured men. Lizzie's bosom lifted, and she began to talk again. She talked as she had talked before in the ‘Dotterel’ . . .

"The boat was high on the beach, and they'd taken the horses out ; they put them in again and made a fourth attempt—a fifth—a sixth. After the sixth we went back to the boathouse ; another man had given it up now, and had taken up an old lobster-pot and was setting the broken ends straight. Useful occupation. . . .

"I told you—did I tell you ? — about old Joe Barker. He had turned sixty then. He'd a wrinkled, nut-cracker face, and his mouth and chin chopped up and down together when he spoke, like one of these talking dolls ; he'd deep furrows from the corners of his mouth, just like one of these ventriloquist's dolls. He was chopping and chewing now to Osa Couper ; and all at once he cried out, ' Have ye done all ye can, ye fishermen ? ' They scowled at him.

" ' Then let th' farmers have a try ; Jerry—Tom—Matthy Dodd—— ' He jumped about here and there, singling out men and giving orders, all about horses. Broadwood sprawled on a locker, and he raised himself on his sound arm. ' Yours is no good if ours won't face it,' he cried ; but Joe took no notice. He and Dodd began to fetch out sweeps and spars and ropes and tackle, and the men outside pitched them into the boat. ' Up ! ' he cried to Broadwood ; and John slid down while he got a stone jar of brandy and a couple of pannikins out of the locker. Some walked slowly out and up the beach, looking back over their shoulders,

and then all at once a man broke into a quick trot. A dozen hangers-about followed, questioning as they ran. In ten minutes the clattering of horses was heard on the beach ; and a man, coming in for more ropes, said that a hundred shovels were clearing the village street. . . .

“ Well, you’ve heard the tale, or you wouldn’t have come to me : you know what we did and how it ended. What more do you want ? To be told what you don’t know, you’ll say. Not you. Nobody wants to be told what they don’t know. They want to be told what they do know, or think they know. Why, all the fellows we glorify are those who tell us in the main what we already know—tell us we’re nearly quite right ; a bit—eh ?—here, or a trifle there that our worships have overlooked in our general rightness, but wonderfully right on the whole. You’ll listen as long as I tell this tale as you already know it ; then you’ll go away and say, Queer old chap ; been master of a grammar-school—disappointed — disillusioned ; but for all that he was one of ’em. . . Well, just as you like.

“ A hundred yards out of the village we turned the women back. All of a sudden Willie Harver-son’s wife sprang forward and kissed him, and then the pent cheer broke out. It was as if for the first time we had all thought clearly what we had begun to do. The wind scattered it, but our hearts rose passionately. We hadn’t spoken coming up

through the village ; we had started beaten, or at least just to endure as much as men could endure ; and now that shout made all the difference. It was arrogant, boastful, young, foolish, victorious. Heigho ! You see, we forget all the shouts of the same sort that end in failure : we only remember them when they come off. The other sort are like the revolts that never succeed : they're revolutions when they do. But then, I suppose we could never endure to remember all our pride and confidence that's come to nothing. . . . So the men kissed their wives. I had nobody to kiss—I've never been married. I saw Reuben's rocket rise clear above the gale, and then we started.

"We had twenty horses, and perhaps twice as many men with shovels. We'd lashed a spar to the boat-carriage, a sort of whiffle-tree, and from that to the ten pair of horses ran such a tackle of ropes and traces as you never saw—all thicknesses, plain and hawser, pieced out and joined everywhere with sailors' knots and hitches. Willie Harverson, on the frame of the carriage, was shouting orders through the speaking-trumpet—to find the ridge past the mill, to rouse High Lee village on the way—I don't suppose anybody heard half he said, for already the digging had begun. Old Joe Barker had donned a cork jacket for warmth, and was flat on the fore air-chamber : he was directing, and Willie, off and on the carriage continually, was his spokesman. Without a

captain, you see, forty diggers are little better than a dozen. The men who weren't digging were scouting, starting her after each halt, or standing by to see that the traces didn't get mixed.

"I said the snow was dry : it was so dry that half of it fell from the shovels of the diggers, blown away by the wind. That meant twice as much stooping, and the men were up to their waists in it. The fellows who scouted for rising ground appeared and disappeared in the drifts, and the snow crusted on their lanterns, melting and freezing both at once. We couldn't hear the sea now ; instead there rose the shrill notes of trees and the silky soft whistle of the ice particles over the snow. We came to a quickset hedge : they dug through the drift to it, slapped the quarters of the horses with the shovels, and we came through with branches of briar and thorn caught in the trace-ropes.

"It's seven miles to Portsannet, with High Lee village half way, and after that the Heights, seven hundred feet of them. I came on to shovel with the second shift. You can dig till you can't straighten your back. I thought myself strong, but—well, a grammar-school was what I was really working for in those days. You may be strong, but you can't pitch stuff behind you at three times the ordinary rate with men who are always forking hay, or hoeing turnips, or loading peats ; and by the time my turn came round to dig for the second time and the third, I wasn't the only one who was

fagging. Then you can go on digging till you don't mind so much ; you're getting stupid then—what employers of bodily labour call a 'good man' ; and I began to be a good man—except that a good man shouldn't quarrel with his tools, and at the last change I'd got hold of a garden spade instead of a flanged shovel—a thing that carried about half a pound—and a self-emptier, like the new boat. I became so good a man that when a fellow took that spade from me I asked him what an odd hum of vibrating iron was that I'd heard for some time past ; and he pointed to Rhodes's mill not a dozen yards away. It was the pin-shaft that hummed. I can't tell you how it had managed to stop up there while the rest of the top storey lay a heap of wreckage below ; I suppose things don't smash quite as you expect 'em to. . . . During my rest I'd been hanging on to one of the flapping life-lines of the boat. Another man had now got it, and I felt irritated, as if he might have found one of his own ; but I clutched the next one, and by and by noticed that the moon was rising. And somewhere about that time we struck the ridge to High Lee.

"The moon showed a grotesque procession. She rose, a bloated disc of dull orange, over the steaming horses and labouring figures, over the big boat squatted among the drifted hills. . . . The wind wasn't blowing quite in such gusts neither,

and I remember thinking that if it would only stop for an hour the snow might pack. We had eased on the digging with the beginning of the ridge, and with the help of the men at the wheels were going at a good three miles an hour. Soon I let go my life-line : I hadn't come as a passenger. There was digging—always more or less digging ; a ridge of land isn't the same thing as a ridge on a second-form school-map. And there were walls too, and cross-walls, and drifts at each. But it only took a minute or two to uncape and break the walls. As I say, we were going nicely ; and as the moon mounted and the wind dropped more and more, we could hear the coughing of the horses and the creaking and straining of the tackle on the spar. . . . And now let me see ; let me see. . . .

"H'm ! Never mind. It doesn't matter so much about Nunan the gipsy ; but Nunan was daft about his horses—the Johnnie Faws' horses. He thought the quarry where they'd left them would be somewhere about there. He wanted us to stop and look for them, and climbed up into the boat to put the matter in a reasonable light to Joe. He woke Osa Couper—did I say that Osa was asleep in the boat ? He was ; but of course Joe wasn't going to burrow up and down the head-land for the Johnnie Faws' horses, and Nunan became morose. By and by Joe packed him off with another fellow to rouse Hadwen—he was a

farmer—and to meet us with the farm-horses at the Beck ; and I began to envy Osa in the boat myself. Let me see. . . .”

He tapped with his lean fingers, as if continuing to himself : it is not unlikely we missed part of the tale. He was very old ; and when at last he went on again, it was with a little rousing and pulling of himself together.

“ Well, we saw it at last, when the moon got high—what the wind had done to the snow. It was glorious, that mounting . . . all in a frost of brilliant stars, . . . and it showed us a miracle. We could see half over the Head now. Acre after acre was fluted and rippled and ravelled, all so still and quiet and spotless ; . . . and only thin copses, a mile, two, four miles away, broke the whiteness. The wind had touched and left it in tresses and flounces ; . . . far away it was channeled like billows, and again thick and smooth ; . . . and trees and bushes were as if something thick and white had been poured over them, all coronets and garlands. The lanterns were murky orange spots, and every detail of the boat, the horses, the harnessing, old Joe’s artificial chin over the gunnel. . . . The *Lizzie Martin* might be driftwood by this time on the other side of the Heights. I didn’t think of the *Lizzie Martin* ; I didn’t think of that grammar-school I was going to have one day ; I only wanted to

look at the snow and the serene moon. . . . Ah well ! . . .

"From the top of the next rise we could see Lee Wood, black below us, and the grey Heights beyond. For the first time the grass showed in patches, and the boat rocked on the carriage, and we dragged back as we descended the slope. Then all at once Joe Barker shouted, 'Don't turn 'em !'

"It seemed that a cart-track ran through the wood that would save a mile and more. In the deep dip at the bottom Nunan was waiting with Hadwen's horses ; and we had taken the dip and risen again on the other side through a gap in a wall before anybody had fairly counted the risk. It was too late to turn them, or perhaps worth chancing—a thirty-foot boat, and all that tangle of cordage. . . . Anyway, we went on, and the wood closed in behind us.

"I think Joe saw his mistake as soon as a branch whipped his hat from his head, for he began to dance and curse. We could hear him blundering about in the boat for the one carpenter's axe we carried. Lifeboats are specially made with a big beam, and they've no business in woods anyway. There was now little snow, but that only made the wood the darker.

"So, soon our spar fetched up against an elm or something, and startled a screeching white owl : we backed the horses and freed it. The shouting and smashing and ripping of branches must have

been heard a mile off ; and then the check came. She wedged between two ash-trees, and Joe sprang down with his axe.

“ ‘ For God’s sake, keep them cattle to th’ track ! ’ he screamed, beside himself ; and a young farmer snatched the axe from him and ran round to the nearest ash. The delay cost us a quarter of an hour, and then we moved forward again. We were savage now, and the farmers flogged the horses and kicked them cruelly under their bellies. The next check was a deep ravine with a beck at the bottom, and the team was in heaps, slipping, stumbling, pulling all ways at once. We lifted her over,—lifted her, with shoulders at spokes, sweeps and spars for levers, men at the ropes among the horses. Then Joe served brandy round. Nunan trotted off to warn the men of High Lee that we were coming, and to get their help. We didn’t stop. We forced back bushes with our bodies, and tore at branches, and wedged the wheels with stones while we chopped partly through trees and then fetched them down with ropes. A rage of cursing took us as we laboured, and some shook torn and bleeding fists at trees. Joe Barker gesticulated impotently, and whimpered that this was bird-nesting, nutting, black-berrying ; and he danced up and down whenever a sapling gave with a loud crack, or twenty yards of clear track showed ahead.

“ I don’t know how long we were in the wood,—

no very great time, I suppose, as time is reckoned ; and then all at once I seemed to see John Swire of High Lee among us, and Nunan again, and a dozen axes going at once. Dreaming ? Oh no, I wasn't ; there really were the axes. The High Lee men had come to help us out, and their horses were waiting at the edge of the wood. We soon came through then, of course, and saw, a field's-length away, dark shapes and lanterns in the snow.

“ John Swire was right : she didn't look much like a new boat by this time. Not that she was splintered much,—double cross mahogany from gunnel to gunnel doesn't splinter much,—but half her life-lines were gone from the ring-bolts, and her new paint was fouled with bark and earth and tree-scrapings—a sight to see. Men swarmed up and overhauled her anxiously ; but she was little the worse save in appearance, and they swarmed down again and began to take out our exhausted horses and to put in their own. They were at the knotted cordage thick as flies round a treacle-string in summer—lengthening, splicing, piecing, sheepshanking, stretching all out, it seemed interminably ; for they had twice our number of horses—too many, I think. They fixed another spar for a double-tree, and set oars across at intervals to keep that monstrous cat's-cradle in something like position : men were told off specially to watch it. A fellow came shouting

up with some oxen ; but we couldn't begin to make yokes for his oxen—the fool hadn't brought any ; and they were sent back with the lads and worn-out horses to High Lee.

“ I forget lots of things that happened just then ; but I remember one thing distinctly—I laughed at the High Lee men when we set off again, for they cheered. I suppose it seemed silly to me. Cheer when you've done things, if you've nothing better to do ; but where on earth is the sense in . . . We knew what cheering was worth. Cheering didn't help Nunan much, who was fretting again about his horses ; nor Joe Barker, who was bewailing the time his blunder had lost us—for we remembered now and then that we were going to Portsannet. It didn't help anybody except perhaps the High Lee men themselves, and they'd come to their senses before we were over the moonlit Heights. . . . We let them do the work for a bit : it was digging, digging again, and the rise and fall of their backs was wearisome to watch. There was little choice of roads now, Osa said (we woke him to ask him). As nearly as he could tell, he'd come fairly straight past the alum-works ; and for the alum-works we made. Soon our feet felt the rise. . . . ”

He seemed very tired, as if the memory of the weariness wearied him again. He rested for three or four minutes. He nodded ; and it is possible that

again he had lost the direct thread of his tale, for when he resumed after his rest it was apparently nowhere.

“ You need purpose, you see. No amount of work kills if you have the purpose. You needn’t achieve it; they say it’s often as well for you when you don’t; but without it you’re hitting the air. Practically, you must have a little reward, too—just enough to make it worth your while to go on; it’s only once in five centuries that a hero’s born who can see his work apparently swallowed up in the ocean with equanimity. Yes, yes; principle’s the biggest thing—the vision, the ideal; nobody denies that. But, as the world’s arranged, it’s much if you can get forward a step at a time and catch a glimpse of your vision between whiles. If you’d asked us, we should have told you, of course, that we were going to Port-sannet. We should have thought you a fool; and yet I doubt if it really occurred to us. I don’t say that I myself didn’t think (if you call it that) of the *Lizzie Martin*. We’ve all thought we’ve been thinking things all our lives, till one day something happens and we think them really and piercingly; but I do say I think we went on mainly because we’d started. It wasn’t what we thought—it was what we didn’t think: we didn’t think of stopping. . . . They used to call me ambitious when, as a youngster, I sometimes

spoke of my grammar-school. Well, every fool's ambitious, if ambition is only thinking that your grammar-school, whatever it is, would be a nice comfortable thing to have. Ambition—purpose—means a lot more than that to me. It's a positive, a vital thing—not mere patience and endurance. It's never to forget that first presumptuous cheer; it's both to see your goal and never to lose sight of the means to it. You haven't got to let the work get its grind in. . . . But we were half way there, you say?—we had a little reward to encourage us? Yes, more than half way. We were past the first lift of the Heights. But what besides? Twice the boat had slid clean off the tail of the carriage, spilling belts and jackets and paraphernalia in the snow; and twice we lashed her on again; and there's so mighty little carriage to lash a big lifeboat to that we had to tauten up every few minutes, and men were hauling direct on the boat to keep her somewhere near the wheels. And what besides? Till we'd come to the Heights we hadn't done enough work to keep us warm, and the High Lee men were frenzied, as we'd been in the wood. Nunan was seeing his quarry every hundred yards, and looking for air-holes, as if his horses had been sheep. Willie Harverson had been left half a mile back at a house—ribs crushed the first time the boat shifted. We digged and hauled and righted the boat, and digged again. The horses rolled with their legs among the ropes; . . . the

'load, . . . the keel alone weighed half a ton. . . . Men were sleeping as they went, and shoving as they slept. . . . I tell you, you don't know anything about it. It's the purposeless work that kills, and practically we had no purpose. You can't have purpose and be frantic. . . . Wait a bit . . .

"And I knew it was silly to keep on thinking with every step, 'This brings you nearer the grammar-school—Portsannet—Portsannet and the grammar-school.' Rousseau did it, you know. But once in a while, when you've laboured till your spirit seems freed from your body, it does seem all one—all part of something you're trying to do, you don't know what—something you're trying to make of your life. . . . It was only seven miles ; but seven miles or seven hundred isn't the point. The point is just the limit of your endurance : if it's only seven yards, seven hundred, or seven million, it comes to just that. . . . Wait a minute. . . . The moon was very little higher, so we couldn't have been very long. I remember noticing this and shouting it out, but I don't know whether it steadied them or not. My mind was somewhere in advance, over the Heights. I was thinking that, once over the top, the men who were pulling would fall back to check her ; that without a pole the team would be useless ; that a pole might be made of a long spar ; that we might zigzag down ; put props through the valve-

holes ; elementary mechanics, parallelogram of forces, grammar-school again, and a lot more light-witted stuff. Then somebody sighted the alum-works, a quarter of a mile to the left. . . . One minute. . . .

“ We were at the top. It’s forty-five years ago, and you can persuade yourself of a lot in less than that time. We persuaded ourselves afterwards that it was a moment of triumph—there was no harm in that ; but we knew better really. We knew in our hearts that the Portsannet men would have to man the boat for themselves, for we reeled like drunkards, went forward like drunkards, with the drunkard’s instinct for his bed. But we boasted foolishly : we would put out ourselves—take her back that night—show what men could do,—I don’t know what. Nobody said it was nonsense. Joe Barker alone seemed to realise that it didn’t follow that because we’d got through, the *Lizzie Martin* had. We could hear the sea now, a dull roar, and far on our right the Abbey light flashed white and red. There was a babel of talking. Men with horses seemed to join us every few minutes. A man called Lockwood came from Lizzie’s old home with two Galloways and a mare in foal, and they hitched them on behind. As they did so we stood for a moment looking down on Portsannet, the river, the scattered lights far up the valley, the grey beyond the harbour-wall. . . .

“They came up, the fish-wives of the quay—the women who swear so—they turned out with the men ; men and women, there were enough to carry the boat and us with it. Three boats had managed to keep head-up the whole of the day—you know that—and the *Lizzie* was one of them. The shouts and lanterns were bewildering, and I heard a fellow give a shout of recognition to Osa Couper. We turned into the street that leads to the movable bridge over the river. The river’s tidal, of course, and there was a beach of mud and pebbles ; and the Portsannet men fought for places as we put her in. She danced on the water again, and they pulled down the river. We trooped across the bridge to the boat-house. They were jacketed, and had fresh oars by the time we caught them up, and the sea was bursting on the sea-wall with tremendous shocks. They got out the very first time. . . .

“You know how many they saved ? Frank and another man and a lad from the *Lizzie*, and seven from a barque, and six from a Lowestoft boat. We saw them all in, and then they wanted us to go to bed. ‘Why should we go to bed ?’ we said. We didn’t want to go to bed. I went to bed sometime the next day, but it wasn’t till the following night that I slept—not to call sleeping. . . . Nunan, they said, was worse than I ; the horses, perhaps, though they got them the next day but one, all but two. . . .”

His eyes were half closed, and we prepared to leave him : he opened them again, hearing us move.

"I want to know if you can tell me something before you go," he said ; "it's often puzzled me. I can tell you in half a minute. It's this : If you were to ask me whether I thought my own life worth such and such a vast deal of labour,—the risk of other lives too, maybe,—I think I should have to say, No. At any rate, it would be a question of balance, value for value, and so on, you see. And I know other men think the same. But as soon as it's a question of anybody else's life, the case seems to be different. John Broadwood would have jumped up just the same if Frank Martin had been the biggest rapsallion who ever handled a net. Now where's the sense in it ? I'm not saying there isn't any ; I'm asking. I went too. I'd have gone in the boat, but it would have kept a better man out of a place ; and I ask myself the reason of it all. It isn't reason—can't be ; and yet reasonable men will do it. 'Thank God for that,' you say. Well, that's unanswerable too. . . . I see you can't help me. I've been asking such questions all my life, and shall go on, I suppose, till the end now. . . . I'm very tired. . . . Good-night. . . ."



249.

Tab 32

